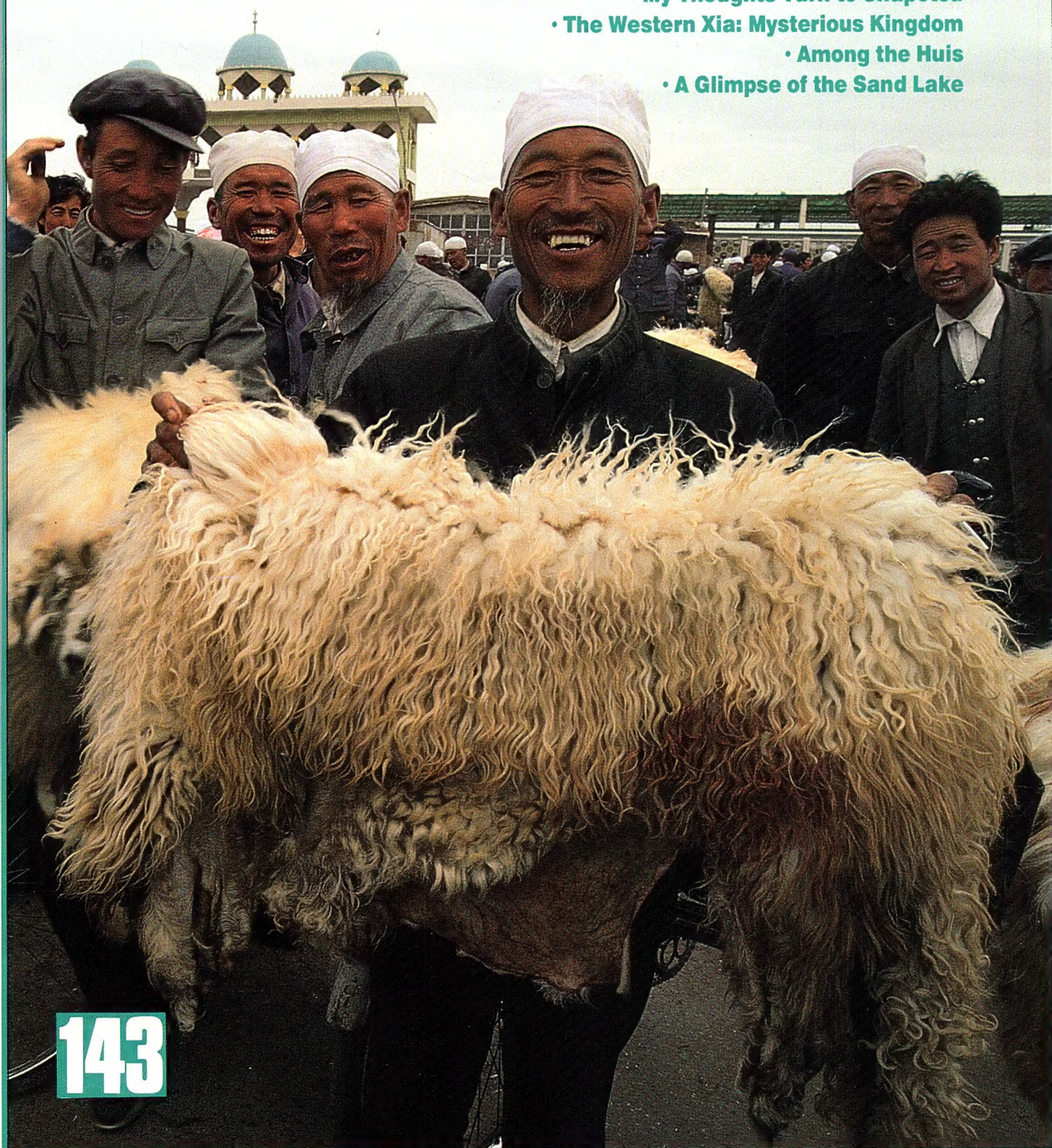


NINGXIA SPECIAL

- My Thoughts Turn to Shapotou
- The Western Xia: Mysterious Kingdom
- Among the Hui
- A Glimpse of the Sand Lake





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EDITORIAL

Ningxia: For Adventurers

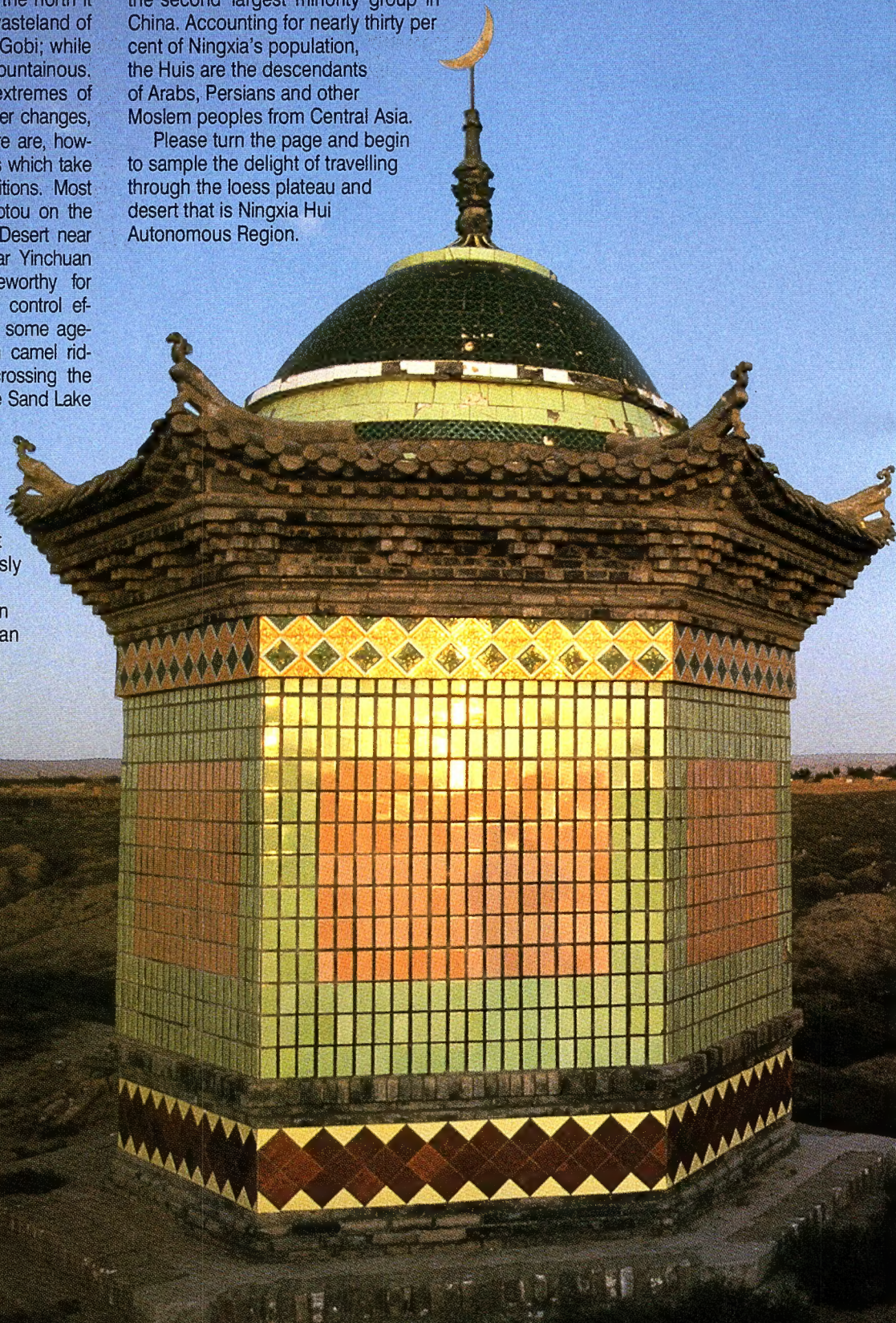
If you are looking for adventure in your travels, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwestern China has plenty to satisfy your quest for action. The vast deserts, mountains and river valleys formed by the Yellow River and its tributaries beckon all those who covet excitement.

At first glance, Ningxia would appear to make a forbidding destination. In the north it is encroached upon by the vast wasteland of the Tengger Desert — part of the Gobi; while in the south it is arid and mountainous. Ningxia's climate is marked by extremes of temperature and unexpected weather changes, including swirling sandstorms. There are, however, a number of tourist attractions which take advantage of these rugged conditions. Most important in this regard are Shapotou on the southeastern side of the Tengger Desert near Zhongwei and the Sand Lake near Yinchuan in the northeast. Shapotou, noteworthy for its successful sand encroachment control efforts, offers the chance to sample some age-old methods of transport: Bactrian camel riding in the Tengger Desert and crossing the Yellow River on sheepskin rafts. The Sand Lake provides the chance to make a camelback foray into the desert as well, plus the pleasures of a water resort.

In spite of the harsh desert conditions which prevail over most of Ningxia, people have continuously inhabited the region since the late Palaeolithic era. Ever since the Han Dynasty, the plains around Yinchuan

have had an excellent irrigation network. We examine the mystery of the Western Xia, whose culture and civilization all but vanished after being vanquished by the Golden Hordes of Genghis Khan. The Western Xia were an amalgamation of nomadic tribes who ruled over a vast territory. They controlled all trade movements between Central Asia and the area controlled by the contemporary Song Dynasty as well as along the east-west axis linking Tibet with southeastern Mongolia. We also visit with the Huis, the second largest minority group in China. Accounting for nearly thirty per cent of Ningxia's population, the Huis are the descendants of Arabs, Persians and other Moslem peoples from Central Asia.

Please turn the page and begin to sample the delight of travelling through the loess plateau and desert that is Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.



C O N T E N T S

No. 143 May 1992

SPECIAL FEATURES

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- 4 The Western Xia: Mysterious Kingdom** This regime once controlled a vast area in China's northwest and monopolized Song Dynasty China's trade with Central Asia.
- My Thoughts Turn to Shapotou** This model of desert reclamation also offers some genuinely unique experiences, such as camel rides and floating on sheepskin rafts.
- 10 Among the Hui — China's Second Largest Minority** The life, customs and culture of these Moslem believers, whose ancestors came from the Middle East, are examined.
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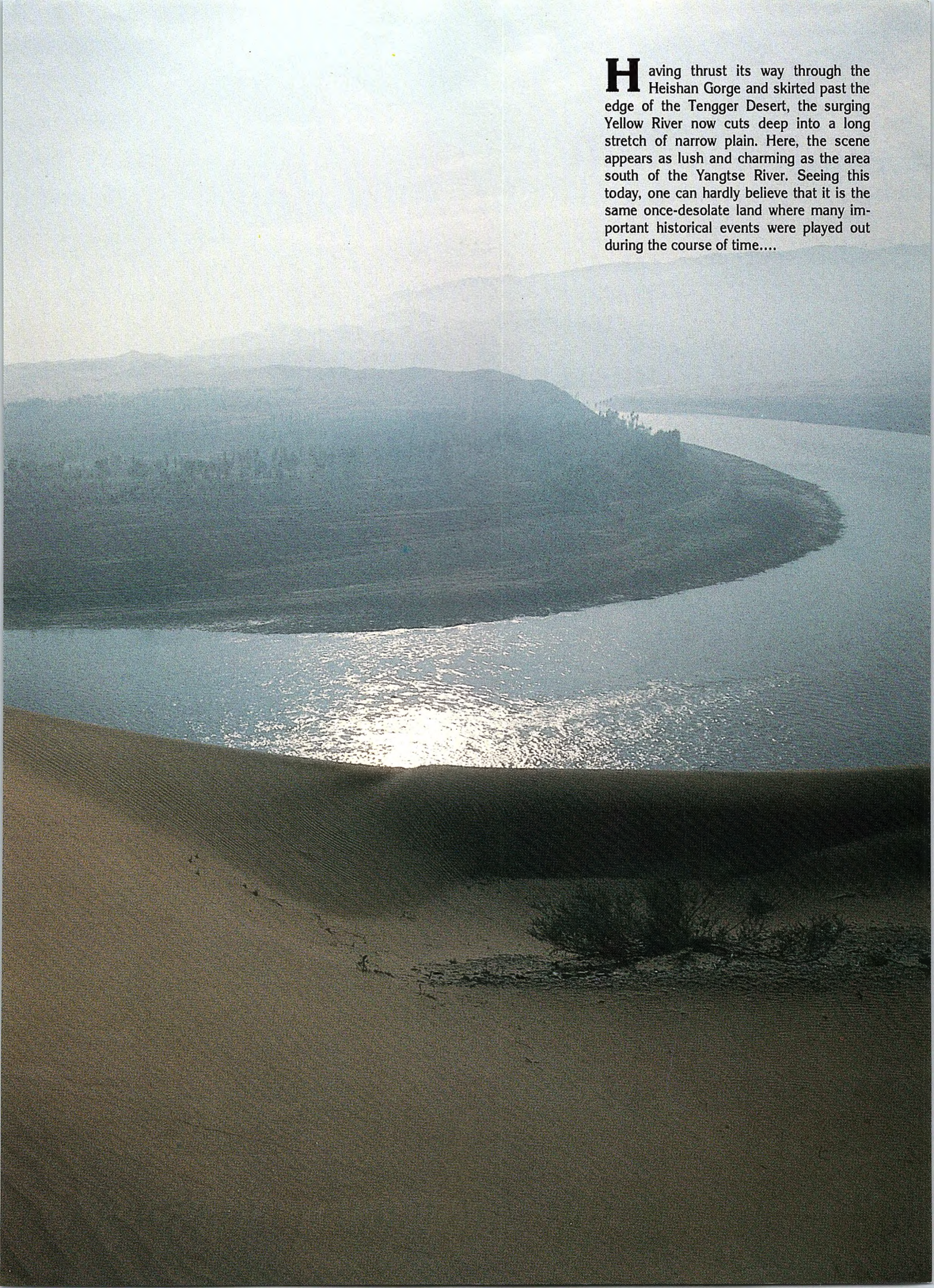
Photo by Tai Chi Yin

NINGXIA

S P E C I A L

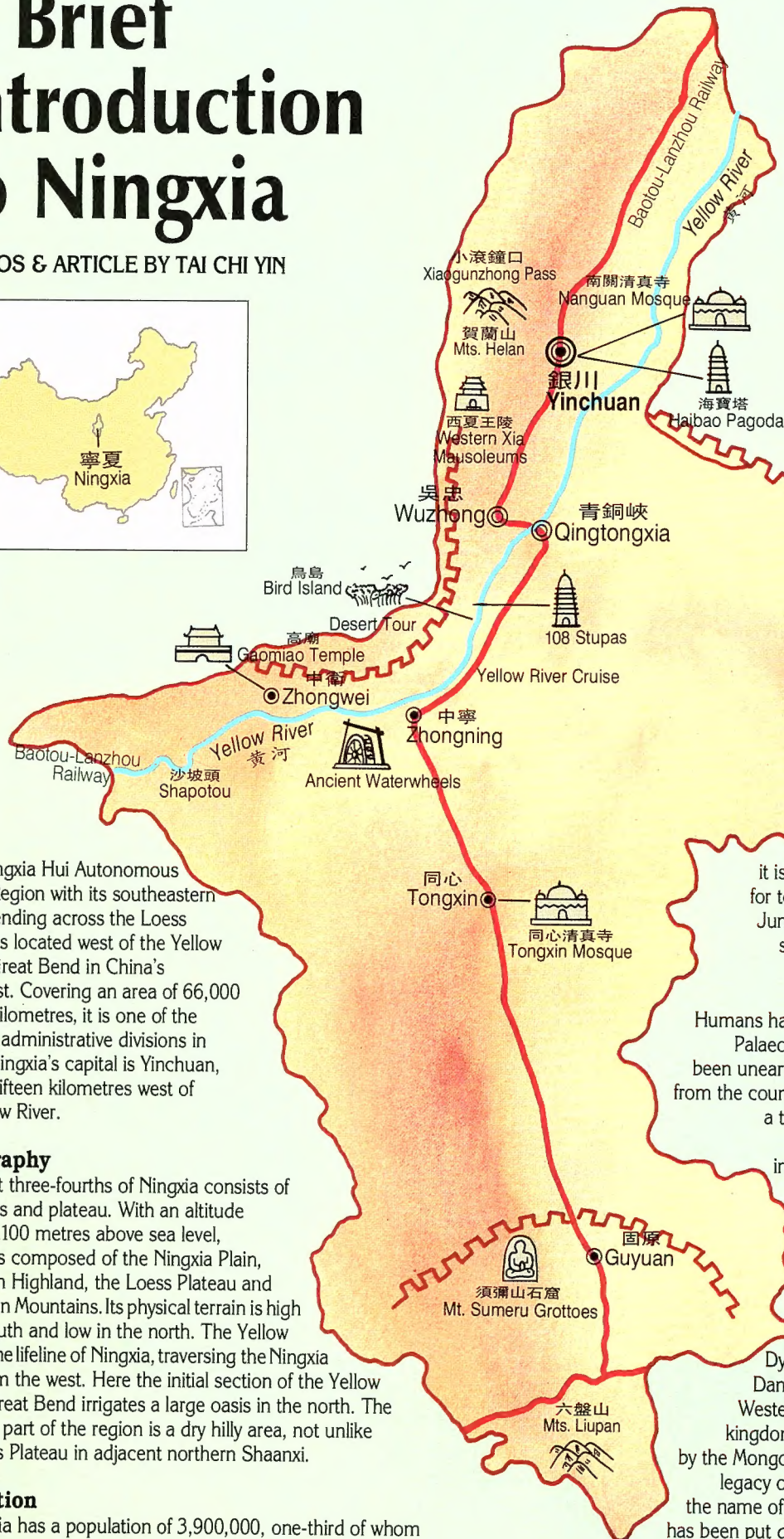


Having thrust its way through the Heishan Gorge and skirted past the edge of the Tengger Desert, the surging Yellow River now cuts deep into a long stretch of narrow plain. Here, the scene appears as lush and charming as the area south of the Yangtse River. Seeing this today, one can hardly believe that it is the same once-desolate land where many important historical events were played out during the course of time....



A Brief Introduction to Ningxia

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY TAI CHI YIN



Jingyuan. Nearly all the Hui are Moslems, thus, Ningxia becomes the most famous homeland of the Huis and the only Hui autonomous region in China.

Climate

Being an arid inland area with scant rainfall and a continental climate, the annual average temperature is around 10°C, but it is cooler in mountainous areas. The temperature varies greatly between noon and morning and evening. Because it is very windy and dusty in spring, the best time for tourists is summer and early autumn, between June and October. In this period there are bright sunshine and gentle breezes, but it is very dry.

History

Humans have inhabited the Ningxia region since the late Palaeolithic Age. A significant find from that era has been unearthed at Shuidonggou 60 kilometres northeast from the county seat of Lingwu in eastern Ningxia. In 1980, a tomb dating back to the 11th century B.C. has been discovered at Guyuan. Somewhat later in time, during the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) people began to open up lands in Ningxia. Since the Han Dynasty, the plains around Yinchuan have had an excellent irrigation network, which has been constantly enlarged. The place was compared to Jiangnan, the lush southern-style fields, as early as in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). In Northern Song times the Dangxiang people from the north established the Western Xia Kingdom with Ningxia as its core. The kingdom existed for 189 years before it was defeated by the Mongolian Army led by Genghis Khan in 1227. This legacy of the Western Xia has been incorporated into the name of Ningxia which suggests that the Western Xia has been put down and peace remains for ever. (In Chinese "ning" means peace.) In 1928 Ningxia Province was founded, and starting from 1958 it has assumed the administrative status of an autonomous region.

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region with its southeastern part extending across the Loess Plateau is located west of the Yellow River's Great Bend in China's northwest. Covering an area of 66,000 square kilometres, it is one of the smallest administrative divisions in China. Ningxia's capital is Yinchuan, located fifteen kilometres west of the Yellow River.

Topography

About three-fourths of Ningxia consists of hilly areas and plateau. With an altitude of over 1,100 metres above sea level, Ningxia is composed of the Ningxia Plain, the Helan Highland, the Loess Plateau and the Liupan Mountains. Its physical terrain is high in the south and low in the north. The Yellow River is the lifeline of Ningxia, traversing the Ningxia Plain from the west. Here the initial section of the Yellow River's Great Bend irrigates a large oasis in the north. The southern part of the region is a dry hilly area, not unlike the Loess Plateau in adjacent northern Shaanxi.

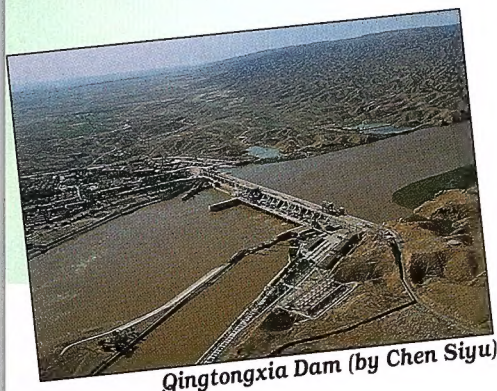
Population

Ningxia has a population of 3,900,000, one-third of whom are Hui people, amounting to nearly one-fifth of the overall Hui population in China. Most of them are concentrated in the mountainous areas of the south such as Wuzhong, Tongxin and

Scenic Sites in Northern Ningxia

Small in area as it is, Ningxia still boasts not a few places worthy to be visited. In the north there are Yinchuan, the Helan Mountains, Wuzhong, Zhongwei, Qingtongxia and the Sand Lake fifty kilometres from Yinchuan.

Yinchuan Visitors interested in history can start from Yinchuan which is located between the Helan Mountains and west of the Yellow River. It was once the capital of Western Xia and consequently a large amount of historical relics has been left in this place. Well-known historical sites in the city include the Haibao Pagoda, Chengtian Temple, Bell and Drum Tower and Yuhuang



Qingtongxia Dam (by Chen Siyu)

(Jade Emperor) Pavilion. With succinct lines in architecture Haibao Pagoda is the oldest stone structure of its kind in Ningxia. Chengtian Temple, first built in the Western Xia period, is rich of the character of that time. In addition, the Nanguan Mosque is also a site worthy of a visit.

Helan Mountains Located northwest of Yinchuan, this mountain range is the natural barrier on the northwest of the Yinchuan Plain. The nine royal mausoleums of the Western Xia at the eastern foothills are the essential remains of the kingdom. Unfortunately, not much is left standing today. A large batch of cliffside paintings dating back to prehistoric times had recently been found in the mountains as well. They help reveal something of the life of the primitive nomadic tribes living in Ningxia.

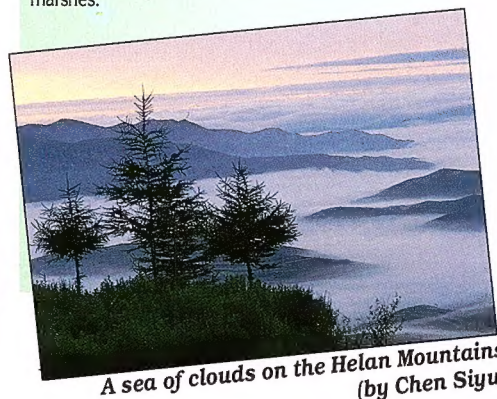


The South Gate in Yinchuan

Qingtongxia Moving south along the Yellow River from Yinchuan one can soon get to the 108 stupas at Qingtongxia Reservoir in Qingtongxia County. Arranged in twelve rows in the shape of a triangle, these stupas built on the west bank of the Yellow River are the only large stupa group in China's ancient pagoda architecture.

Zhongwei Located on the edge of the Tengger Desert, one of China's three largest deserts, Zhongwei is the best-known oasis at the Ningxia Great Bend. Shapotou in the city is one of its famous tourist attractions. Travellers can tour the desert in groups on camels, or cruise the Yellow River riding on the traditional sheepskin raft.

The Sand Lake After visiting Shapotou you can also venture to the Sand Lake to the north of Yinchuan. This newly developed tourist spot with desert and a lake provides sites for angling and a boat trip among reed marshes.

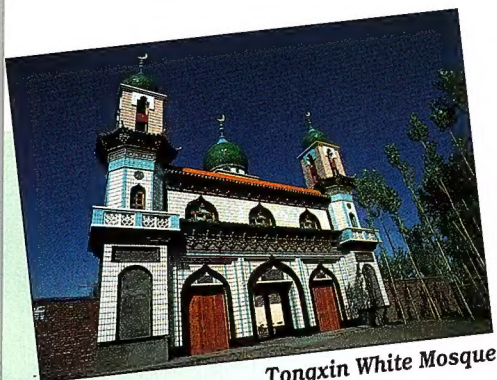


A sea of clouds on the Helan Mountains (by Chen Siyu)

How to tour Ningxia

Lying along the vital communication line leading to Shaanxi, Gansu and Inner Mongolia, but with only the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway passing through its northern part and few air routes, Ningxia at present still appears to be an out-of-the-way place.

From Beijing to Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia, you can take Train 43 or 169, a 25-hour journey via Hohhot, capital of Inner Mongolia, and Baotou, with the scenery of many deserts and grasslands on the way. Train 43 runs past Lanzhou, capital of Gansu. From Lanzhou it takes ten hours to get to Yinchuan.

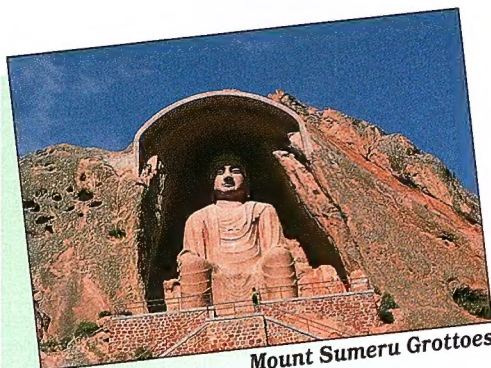


Tongxin White Mosque

Scenic Sites in Southern Ningxia

Compared with northern Ningxia, the mountainous areas in the southern part look desolate. Going south along the highway from Zhongwei, the traveller will gradually move away from the Yellow River and cities and towns. As you enter a region where Hui people are concentrated, you will have a chance to experience Hui customs and hospitality. Interesting sites in this area include Tongxin, Guyuan, Mount Sumeru Grottoes and Mount Liupan.

Tongxin The population of the Hui people in this county seat ranks second in size throughout Ningxia. The extant Grand Mosque in the town is the oldest in Ningxia. Traditional customs of the Huis can be observed here as well. The open air market fair at Tongxin is one of the biggest of its kind in China's northwest.



Mount Sumeru Grottoes

Guyuan From Tongxin, the highway leads southward to Guyuan and the Loess Plateau panorama, strategically placed where the ancient Silk Road threads through. On this site, originally known as Yuanzhou, a great number of ancient Persian relics now displayed in the Guyuan Museum has been unearthed from Li Xiang's Tomb dating back to the Western Zhou era (c. 11th century-770 B.C.).

Mount Sumeru Grottoes Sixty kilometres northwest of Guyuan one finds the important grottoes at the eastern foot of Mount Sumeru with sculptures by a group of monks at different points of ancient time. Caves from the Northern Wei and Sui eras are square with a pagoda-shaped column in the middle, while Tang era caves

Individual travellers from Beijing or Inner Mongolia usually prefer to stay a few days at Yinchuan on their way to Lanzhou. If you want to travel to Yinchuan from Hong Kong, you can first fly to Beijing or Xi'an in Shaanxi and change planes there; or fly to Lanzhou first and continue by train.

The Baoji (Shaanxi)-Zhongwei (Ningxia) Railway is scheduled for completion in mid-1992. The line runs past such places as Guyuan and Tongxin which are the main tourist attractions in southern Ningxia. After a stay in Xi'an, you can go northward for a visit to Ningxia.

As to accommodation, the bigger cities such as Yinchuan, Wuzhong and Zhongwei have standard hotels. Naturally in small towns and the countryside lodging can also be found.



The Long March Memorial Pavilion on Mount Liupan

have no central columns. Sumeru means "treasured mountain" in Sanskrit and this reflects what some maintain was a conscious sculpting of some statues and architecture to resemble Indian architecture.

Liupan Mountains Also known as Longshan Mountains, the peak of the mountains is in Longde County where the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan died of an illness 700 years ago. The section of the highway in this area twists and turns and it uncharacteristically has a misty climate. Erected atop the peak is a memorial stele of the Long March. **G** **Translated by K.V. Ku**

NINGXIA SPECIAL

The Western Xia: Mysterious Kingdom



PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY TAI CHI YIN



Li Yuanhao, founding emperor of Western Xia, leads his army on an encroachment assault of the Northern Song Dynasty. (Oil painting in the Ningxia Museum at Chengtian Temple in Yinchuan)

In 1038, Li Yuanhao, tribal leader of an ethnic group called the Dangxiangs, founded the Western Xia Kingdom. Two centuries later in 1227 it was crushed by Mongolians. During its prime, Western Xia controlled an expansive territory that reached "the Yellow River in the east, Yumen in the west, Xiaoguan in the south and the Great Desert in the north". The kingdom created a splendid culture that incorporated the influence of many different peoples.



Pottery Figure

This painted pottery figure unearthed during repair of the 108 stupas at Qingtong Gorge was made in vivid posture and with fine workmanship.

The Written Language of Western Xia

As a result of looting by Mongolian conquerors very little Western Xia literature was left behind. What is known is that the written language of Western Xia was created by adapting the Han script, combining different elements, each with a separate meaning as well as pictophonetics and mutually explanatory or synonymous characters. Written in four styles, cursive, official script, seal character and regular script, the written language of Western Xia was complicated because of the great number of strokes in each character.



Glazed Bricks, Tiles and Ornamental Animals on Roof Ridges

Unearthed at the Western Xia mausoleums, the glazed bricks and ornamental animals from roof ridges are mostly green. These materials are an indication of the popular use of green glaze in Western Xia architecture. They are said to have been produced in kilns near the mausoleums.



Coloured Wooden Vase

Unearthed at the Twin Pagodas at Baisikou at the foot of the Helan Mountains, the vase is still freshly coloured though it had been buried underground for over 1,000 years. As the Twin Pagodas were possibly built during the Western Xia period, experts believe that the vase could be a masterpiece of Western Xia arts and crafts.





On the top row of the 108 stupas, one can get a panoramic view of the Yellow River and the mountainous regions nearby.

The Western Xia, an ancient kingdom, remains a mystery. For example in the voluminous *History of Twenty-Four Dynasties*, only the part on the Western Xia is missing.

Genghis Khan's Deathbed Wish: Conquer Western Xia

Why is it that Western Xia is so mysterious? An explanation has to begin with Genghis Khan, the Mongol ruler.

In its 347 years, Western Xia was an influential kingdom in China's west. After Genghis Khan became the sovereign ruler of Mongolia in 1205, he led his army until they came to the border of the Western Xia empire on their push westward. More than a decade went by and the Mongols still could not overcome the Western Xia.

In 1226, his cavalry once again besieged the capital of Western Xia, but Genghis Khan fell gravely ill. On his deathbed, he instructed his close aides that his funeral should be delayed in order to avoid leaking the news of his death and the resulting dampening of troop morale so that the Mongol army could crush the Western Xia.

Three days after Genghis Khan's death, the king of Western Xia, unaware of the Mongolian leader's death, surrendered. Following Genghis Khan's will, the Mongol army carried out a massacre in the capital of Western Xia, killing every relative of the king who had the family name of Li. The royal mausoleums of Western Xia at the foot of the Helan Mountains also suffered savage destruction. Thus, the Western Xia came to an end at the hands of the Mongols.

The 108 Buddhist stupas are built on the bank of the Yellow River and against the mountainside.



In the wake of the Mongol army's reckless burning, killing and looting, most of the records, books and cultural objects of the Western Xia were lost. As a result, very little original literature that can be used to study Western Xia is available.

Foreigners Are Authorities on the Western Xia

Today, most of the authorities on the study of Western Xia history are scholars in Russia, France and Japan. Surviving literature about Western Xia, which was rare to begin with, ended up outside China. Around 1908, Kozlov, a Russian officer, took away, from a pagoda at the ruins of Heishuizhen in Ejina Banner, Inner Mongolia, nearly 10,000 pieces of original Western Xia script. Merely six years later, Stein, a British archaeologist, came to the same site and left with a great collection of Western Xia materials, making modern China's interpretation of Western Xia history even more difficult.

Among these materials, what historians are most interested in is the mysterious Western Xia script. Today, only a very few scholars understand the script. The language spoken by the Dangxiang tribe belongs to the Han-Tibetan language family, the same branch as that of the Yi, Lisu and Naxi in Southwest China. The characters were conceived on the same lines as Chinese characters. Dictionaries, Buddhist and Taoist works as well as classical Chinese texts were translated into Xia and still exist.

Western Xia: A Powerful Kingdom

Western Xia was founded by the Tuoba people, a tribe of the Dangxiang ethnic group, which was a branch of the Qiang nationality and lived in Qinghai early in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Under attack by the Tufans in the early 8th century, the tribe was compelled to move eastward to today's northern Shaanxi and eastern Gansu Provinces and gradually grew into a powerful military force.

Later, led by three generations of their leaders, the first, Li Jiqian was bestowed the royal surname Li, by Li Shimin otherwise known as Tang Emperor Taizong. The others were Li Deming, and Li Yuanhao. All gradually expanded its territory during a period of more than half a century. In 1038, they founded the kingdom of the Great Xia. Lying in China's northwest and west of the Yellow River, the regime was thus named Western Xia. Its territory covered present-day Ningxia, northwest Gansu, northern Shaanxi, northeast Qinghai, southwestern Inner Mongolia and parts of Xinjiang and Mongolia.

In 1033, Li Yuanhao changed the name of Xingzhou to Xingqingfu at present-day Yinchuan in Ningxia and made it the capital. He also formally set up an administrative and a military system, and created a script. In 1038, he officially crowned himself emperor. After that, the kingdom enjoyed a long period of stability. The city of Xingqingfu had a grand and magnificent palace, and along the Helan Mountains were a summer resort, auxiliary palace, monasteries and mausoleums. Buddhist monasteries proliferated. In Xing-

Life in Ancient Western Xia, a dance performed by the Ningxia Song and Dance Ensemble, is a choreographic interpretation of the prosperous life in the Western Xia royal court.



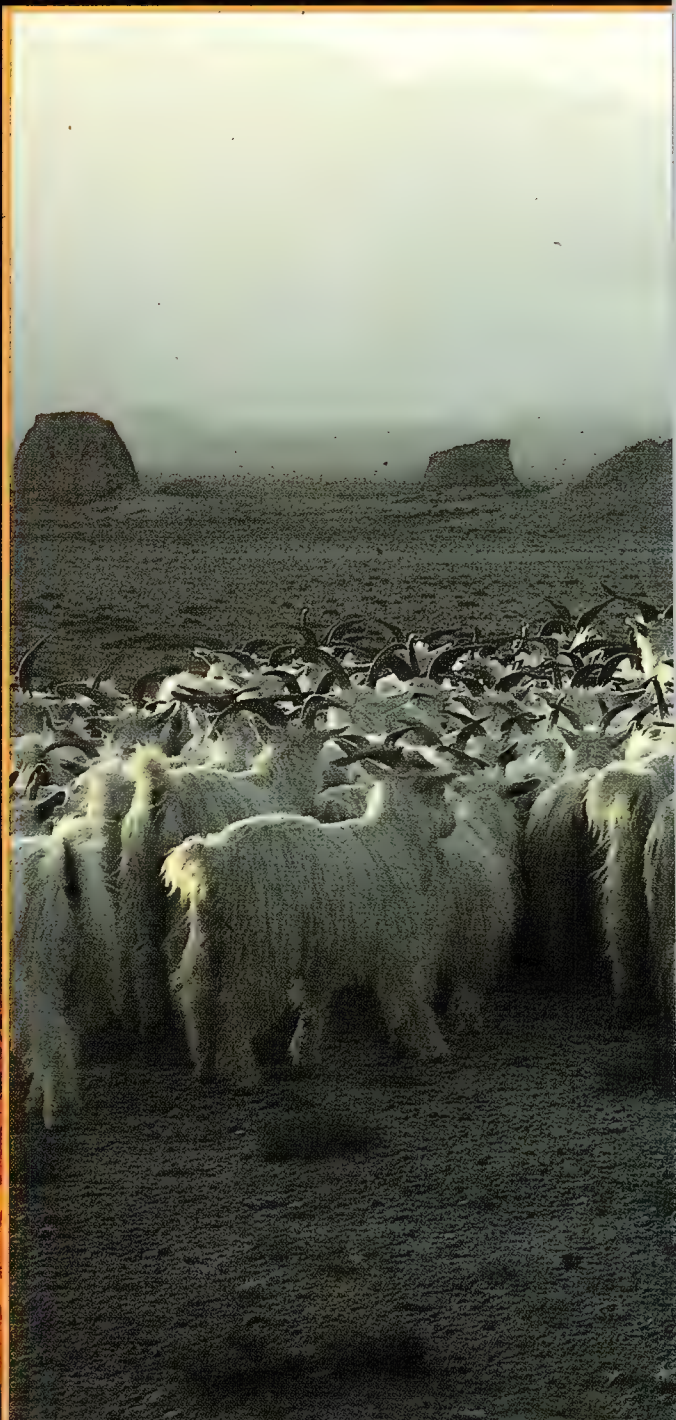
qingfu alone, there were several very large monasteries such as the Chengtian Temple, Jietan Temple, Gaotai Temple and many stupas.

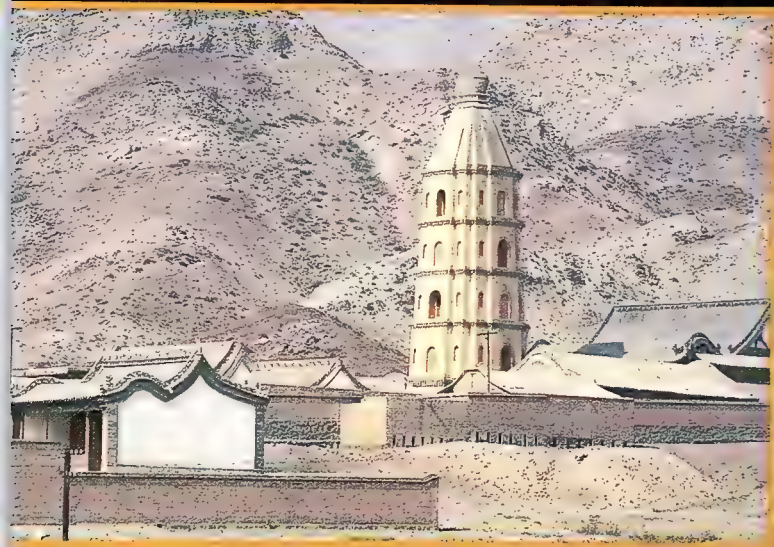
Development of the city also had a great impact on the rise of industry and commerce. Animal husbandry was the cornerstone of the Western Xia economy. Leather, fur, and woollen textiles were the main handicraft sectors. Commerce also played an important role as the Xia controlled exchanges between the Song, Liao and Jin. Marco Polo in his *Travels* commented that the cloth made from camel hair was the most beautiful in the world and sold to Qidan (Khitan) and many other far-away places. Scholars have concluded that people in Western Xia, by combining the life styles and customs of people living in the Central Plains and ethnic minorities residing in the northwest, and through trade, managed to create a splendid civilization.

Western Xia Mausoleums: Oriental Pyramids

Though once a great kingdom, the Western Xia legacy can only be traced to a small number of sites in China's northwest, such as the murals of the Dunhuang Grottoes, the great reclining Buddha statue in Zhangye, the tablet of Huguo Temple in Wuwei and the remains of Heishuizhen in Inner Mongolia. Ningxia, once the centre of Western Xia,

▼ This Western Xia mausoleum in suburban Yinchuan is a scene of solemnity. It is said that all of these mausoleums had green glazed tiles.





▲ **Wudang Temple, at Dawukou in northern Ningxia, was first completed during the Western Xia period. Interestingly, it is devoted to both Buddhism and Taoism.**

ern Xia, has a few more historical sites. The most significant ruins of Western Xia, its royal mausoleums, are in the eastern Helan Mountains in the suburbs of Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia.

In an area stretching about four kilometres from east to west and ten kilometres from north to south, nine mausoleums of Western Xia emperors along with over 140 auxiliary tombs dot the hillsides. The tombs, built with loess bricks, stand high like small hilltops. As they resemble the shape of Egyptian pyramids, these royal tombs have long been referred to as "Oriental pyramids". Once the Western Xia perished, all the ground structures at the mausoleums were reduced to rubble. Fortunately, the basic frames of the tombs were preserved.

Each mausoleum itself is an independent rectangular cemetery covering an area of over 100,000 square metres. Similar in layout, they all face south and southeast. In each cemetery, stands a group of structures in a fixed relationship to each other. For instance, there are always corner towers at the four corners of the cemeteries.

In recent years, archaeologists have uncovered a great quantity of artifacts, all of which were exquisitely crafted and reflect a strong influence of the northwestern ethnic groups. These objects are of great value in studying the Western Xia. One major basic question though still remains unanswered: Just which emperors of the Western Xia were the occupants of these mausoleums?

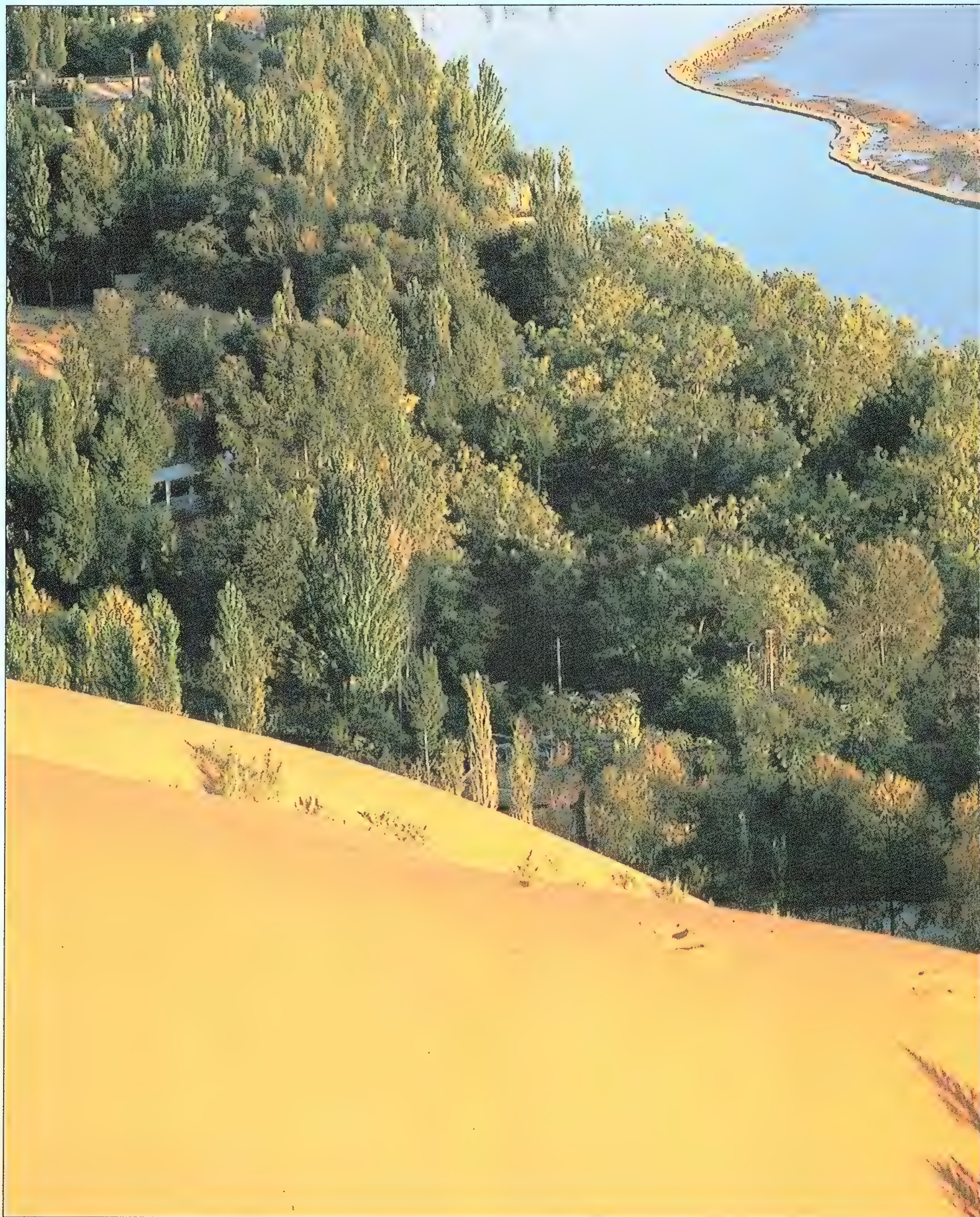
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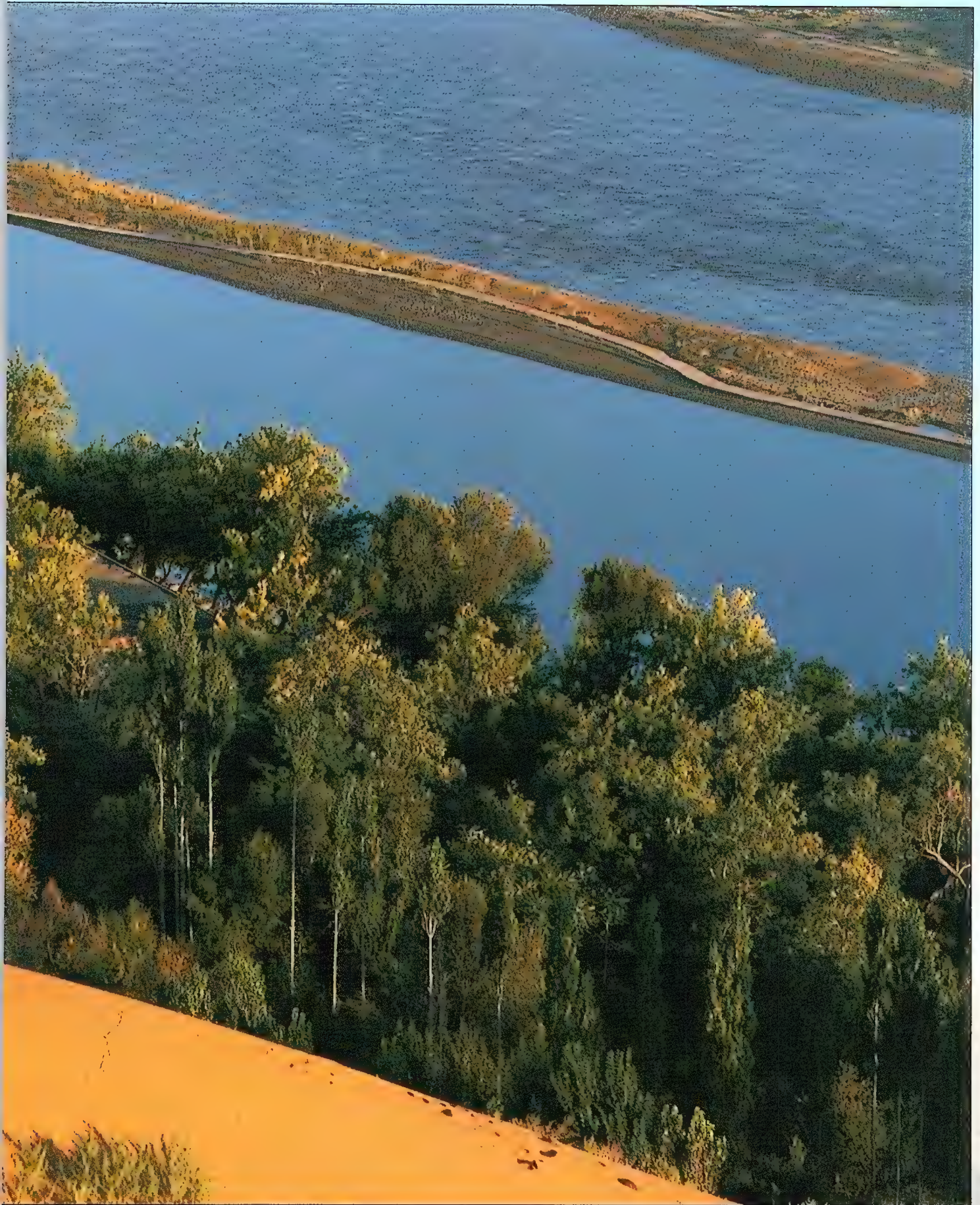


NINGXIA SPECIAL

My Thoughts Turn to Shapotou

PHOTOS BY





Looking down from the top of Shapotou, one can see the contrasts of yellow sands, green trees and the sky-blue water of the Yellow River.

The late autumn setting sun was hanging over the western hills when I climbed up the slope by the bank of the river. The desert in the near distance was dyed crimson red, and the Yellow River was flowing like a golden dragon between the mountains while sheets of clouds were floating in the sky. As I ascended the Watch Tower on top of Shapotou and looked down, the mountains, the Yellow River, the Great Wall, oases, desert, fields, houses, flocks of sheep, rafts, camels, waterwheels – all showered by the rays of the setting sun – came into view. These disconnected things crammed into a limited space made one feel as if one was in a dreamland.

Shapotou Became a Sea of Sand

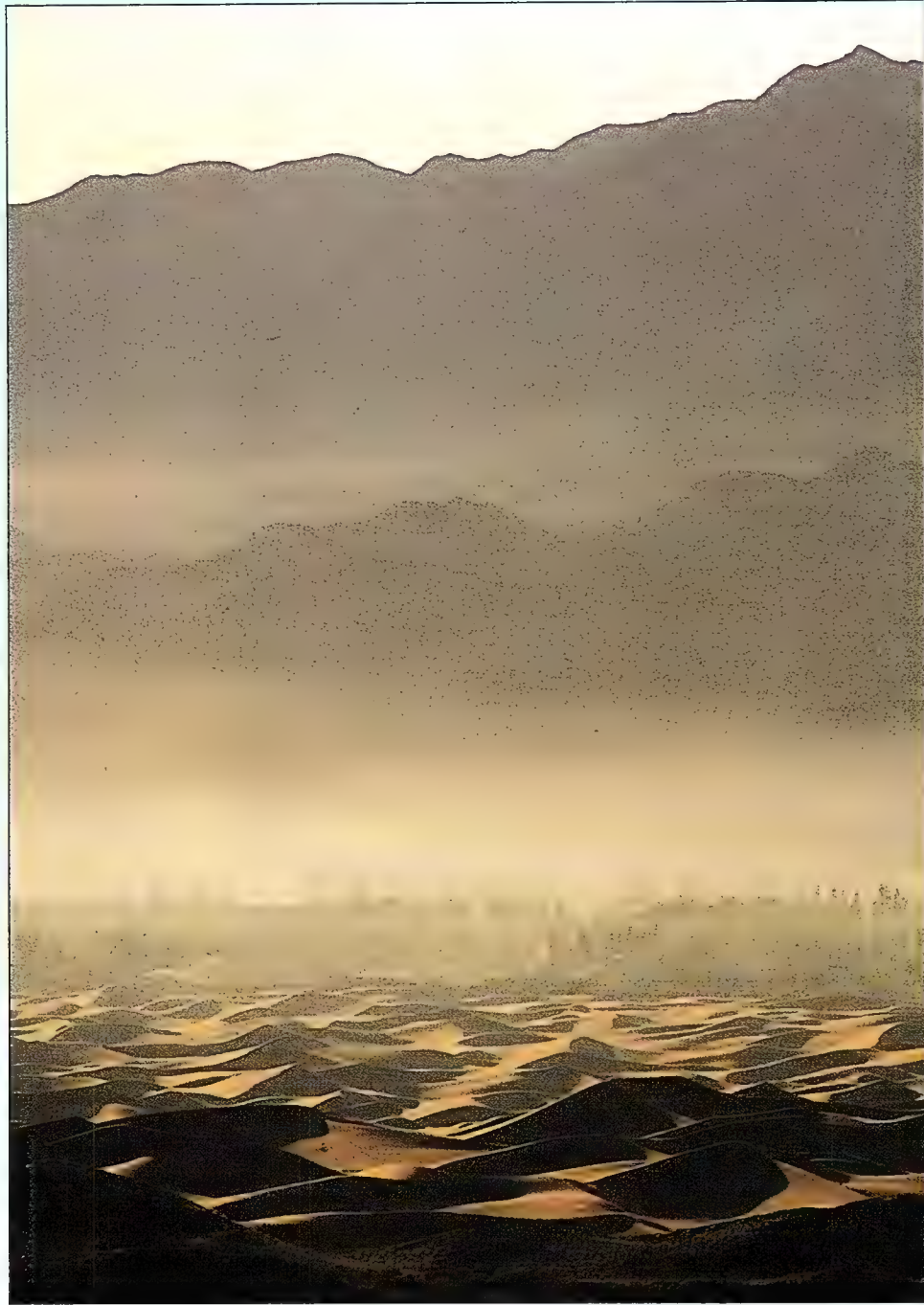
Shapotou is located on the southeastern side of the Tengger Desert, about twenty kilometres away from the seat of Zhongwei County in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The name Shapotou means “sand dune”. Many years ago winds began to swell up from the northwest desert and swept yellow sands continuously into the area of Ningxia. As the topography around Shapotou was low, the strong gales could not be obstructed and gradually the place became inundated with sand. In the last three hundred years the sand kept moving southeastward until it stretched as far as the foot of the Xiangshan Mountain on the south bank of the Yellow River. The Zhongwei Oasis was forced to retreat by 7.5 kilometres, and over 3,300 hectares of farmland were engulfed by the sand. Today, the sand is 70 to 100 metres thick, 71 per cent of which is drift sand. It really can be considered a sea of sand.

A Legendary City Buried Under the Sand

Legend has it that Shapotou was once an ancient city called “The City of Prince Gui”, with busy streets, magnificent palaces and solemn temples. At the southern gate there was a large bell tower, with a bell so big that five people could not get their arms around it.

The last prince of the city was surnamed Wu. One year his son, Wu Qi, commanded his troops on a northern expedition but unfortunately was defeated in the desert and

Every morning the Tengger Desert at the foot of the Xiangshan Mountain is shrouded in mysterious mist, which slowly dissipates (1). The flow of the Yellow River in this section is slow, the clear, quiet almost lacustrine water is easy to cross on sheepskin rafts (2). A small sheepskin raft is usually made of fourteen skin bags. When the air in the bags leaks out, the raftsmen immediately mend the leak and refill it with air (3). While on land travel, the camel knows how to descend stairs, but the tourists on the camel's back are gripped with fear at each step (4).





captured. The tribe's chieftain admired his valour and desisted from killing him on the condition that he swore to Heaven that he would stay in the northern region the rest of his life. Wu Qi swore an oath: "If I run away, may I be crushed to death by the yellow sands." A month later, when the tribe's chieftain slackened his guard, Wu Qi seized his chance and took flight on his steed. But scarcely had he covered a few miles when a yellow sandstorm arose and gave chase as far as the City of Prince Gui. The big bell at the southern city gate sounded a thunderous alarm, but it was too late, the sandstorm was sweeping too fast, and in no time at all the fields, crops, palaces and houses were buried and the City of Prince Gui was completely obliterated. However, the big bell was not silenced. Even today, whenever people slide on the sandy slope, it still produces booming sounds, a marvellous natural phenomenon.

Later people came to understand that the "Bell Tolling on the Sand Slope" is the electrostatic effect produced by the friction of the top layer of dry sands heated by the sun with the layer of damp sands below. It has nothing to do with the legend. However, it was interesting to hear the story during a visit.

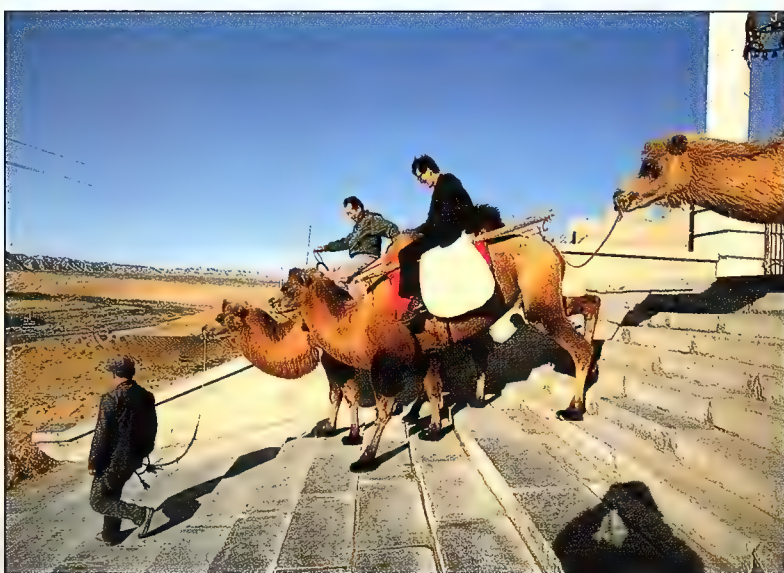
World-Renowned Achievements in Sand Control

Shapotou has gained much useful experience in the prevention of the encroaching by the desert. Many countries which are troubled by the expansion of deserts have sent people here to research and investigate. In 1956, at the foot of Shapotou on the bank of the Yellow River, the Shapotou Desert Research Institute was established, in which experts are working on how to stabilize and cultivate trees and shrubs in the deserts. The achievements at Shapotou are all due to their hard work.

If you travel by train along the famous Railway of the Desert – the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway and pass by Shapotou, you will see the moving sand dunes which are from several metres to even tens of metres higher



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than the railway. Like powder in texture, the drifting sands move slowly in the breeze, but in a gale, the sands could drift over the rails, burying the tracks and holding up trains. To prevent such encroachment, straw was laid in a checkerboard pattern over large areas to protect and encourage plant growth in the land adjacent to the railway and to prevent the sand from drifting further south. Sand fixation projects in various stages of completion can be seen further away. Thus the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway runs unimpeded and further expansion of the Tengger Desert is held in check.

The Yellow River Turns Purplish Blue

"In the past, as the desert moved southward, the Yellow River was forced to change its course," said Mr Tao from the local travel agency. "This is one reason why the river meanders today."

It is true that when the Yellow River flows past Shapotou, its course is so intertwined with the high mountains and the desert that it looks like a big knot in a cord, and the section of the river near the railway line turns into the shape of the letter "C". Viewed from the top of the sand hill on the western bank, the protruding part of land is encircled by the river and looks like a tiny islet, and the river is like a pool of clear spring water, totally different from the muddy Yellow River that most people know.

The Yellow River rises in Qinghai Province and runs with great speed through the mountain area and the Loess Plateau. The large quantity of mud and sand it carries makes its water muddy and yellow, hence the name. After it flows out of the Heishan Gorge in Gansu Province and reaches the comparatively flat Great Bend area of Ningxia, its speed is reduced, the mud and sand sink to the riverbed and the water becomes clear.

Sheepskin Rafts

Sheepskin rafts venturing from Lanzhou to Zhongwei pass by Shapotou. Everyday early in the morning raftsmen gather on the bank of the river outside the village to ask visitors to cross the river in their rafts. Each visitor is charged one or two yuan. When I first boarded the raft made of fourteen pieces of inflated sheepskin, I really felt rather nervous, but once I saw how skilfully the raftsmen piloted in the swift rapids, my fears were allayed. There is one limitation, however,



The highway from Zhongwei to Shapotou is built along the railway. The truck kicks up a storm of dust behind it (3). The Zhongwei people often come to transport goods from Shapotou. On the 20-kilometre highway, they amuse themselves with flutes (2). Somewhere near the highway the two wooden waterwheels look ordinary, but they once irrigated 67 hectares of fields (1). These square grass sand-controllers which resemble a checkerboard are made by placing dry grass in deep sand. They prevent the desert from further expansion (4).



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these rafts can only be directed by flowing downstream with the current.

Originally, the raft would have been made of one sheepskin. The skin was blown up into a floatation device which people put under their arms when they swam across the river. But this method soaked the river crossers, and what was more, was not safe. To overcome these shortcomings, people later joined several inflated sheepskin bags together and tied them to wooden poles with thin ropes. This was the skin raft we see today. Safe and with a large carrying capacity, this kind of skin raft became the main means of transport on the upper reaches of the Yellow River. Even today, people around Lanzhou and Jingtai in Gansu are still using sheepskin rafts to transport cargo to Zhongwei. During the few days I stayed in the Shapotou Village, I witnessed about a dozen such rafts laden with boxes of goods. Operated by two or three raftsmen together, they drifted downstream along the river. The only regret was that the magnificent scene of the past which could be appreciated when rafts drifted downstream from Lanzhou to Baotou is no longer to be seen, because the flow of the Yellow River became sluggish and navigation from Ningxia to Inner Mongolia became almost impossible after the Qingtongxia Dam was constructed in the 1960s.

Riding Camels and Visiting Waterwheels

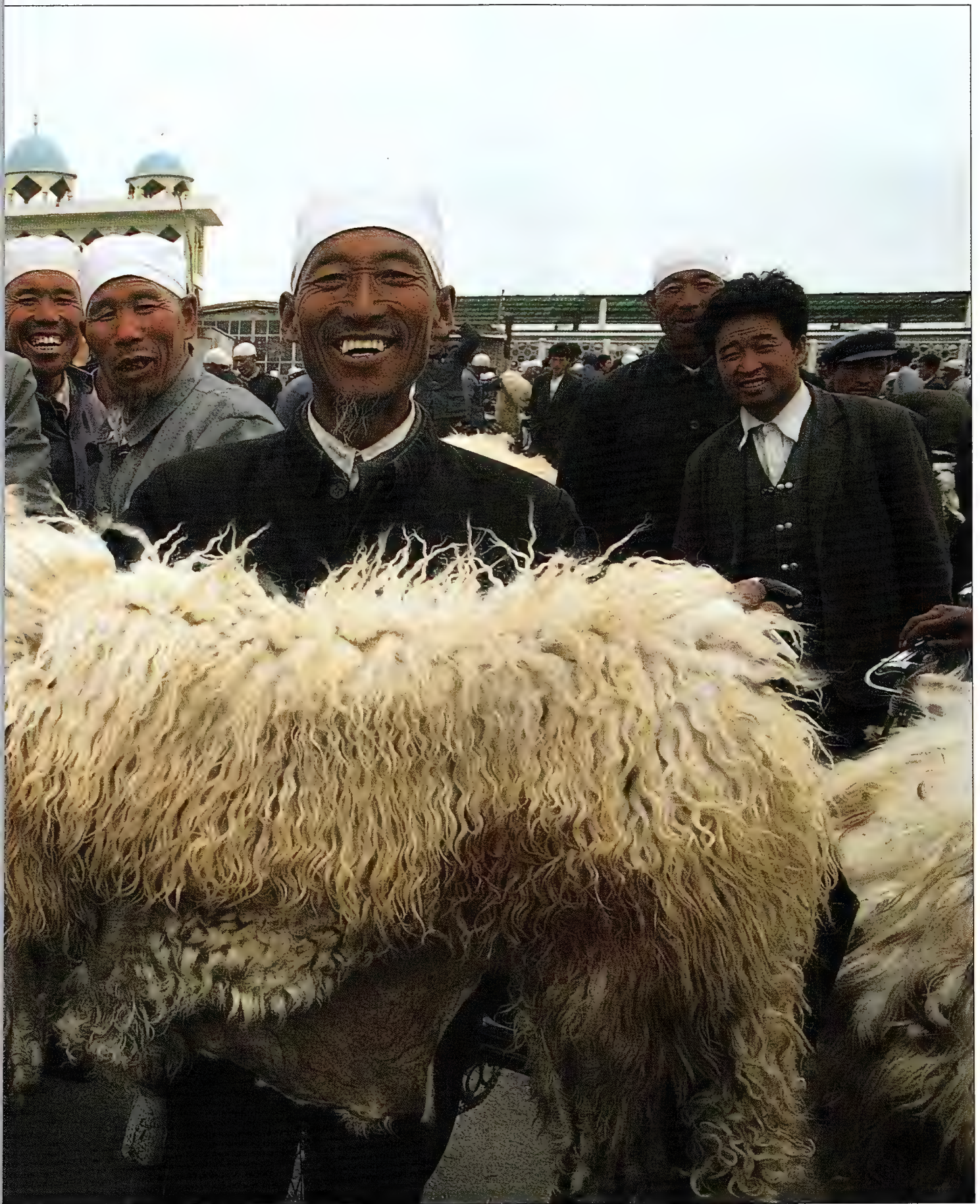
Apart from watching sheepskin rafts drifting on the Yellow River, tourists can also ride camels into the Tengger Desert and visit the waterwheels. With its bulky body the camel sways to and fro when walking, not exactly a comfortable ride for those who are not used to it. But the Tengger Desert is one of the most spectacularly beautiful deserts in China. It would be a shame if you travelled this far and did not have a chance to walk in it.

The two waterwheels on the Yellow River are, in fact, veritable antiques. With a diameter of thirty metres, the two old waterwheels, each with 48 plates, were made between the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and can irrigate a total of 67 hectares of land. The creation of the oasis at Zhongwei was the major contribution of these two waterwheels. Today, however, the Zhongwei people use electric pumps to irrigate their fields instead of these waterwheels.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Among the Hui China's Second Largest Minority





Pedlars at the market in Tongxin trying to sell sheepskins.

Water supply is scarce in the mountains in southern Ningxia. The meandering rivers are narrow and shallow.

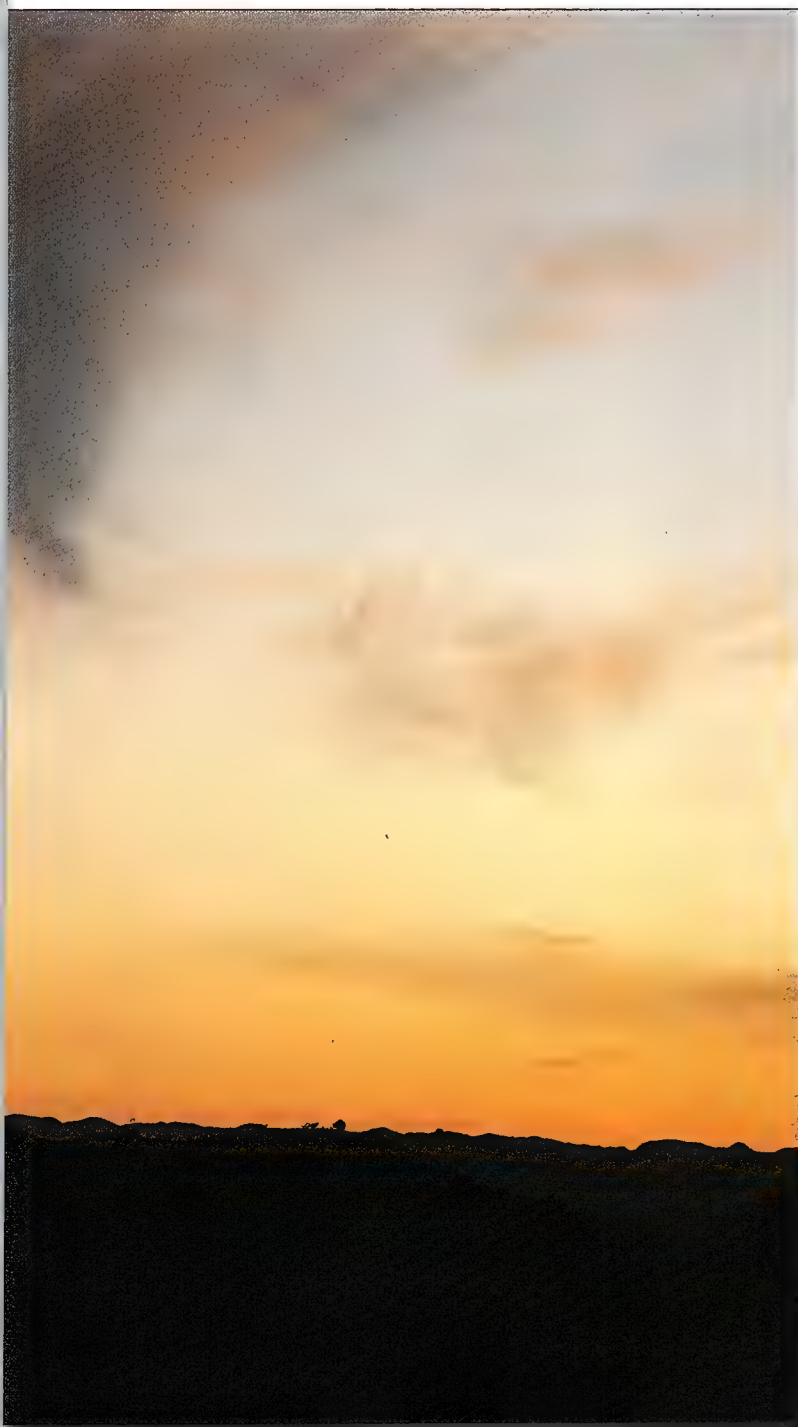
“At the beginning of the 13th century, descendants of the Huihes began a massive migration to China. Some of them moved to the areas in and around Mount Liupan, becoming the earliest Hui immigrants in Ningxia.”



The Grand Mosque at Tongxin was converted from a Buddhist temple which was a wood structure in the architectural style typical in northern China.



The climate at Tongxin, situated in a mountainous region in southern Ningxia, is dry. Many local residents live in cave dwellings in the mountain valleys.



Some of the reasons why Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is different from the Central Plains are the distinctive life styles, customs and habits associated with the indigenous Hui nationality. Of the region's total population of 4.3 million, over 1.3 million, or one out of every three people are Huis. Mostly inhabiting the mountainous areas in southern Ningxia, they are found in large concentrations in Jingyuan, Tongxin, Wuzhong, Xiji, Guyuan and Haiyuan.

Unlike many other minorities in China, the Huis wear very little, if any, traditional costumes of their own, save for headwear. They do not have a distinctive language since they speak the same Chinese dialect as the Han people. More often than not, they resemble the Han people who make up the majority of the Chinese population in their physical appearance. It is more their culture and customs stemming from their belief in Islam which distinguishes the Hui from the Han. They adopted the Islamic faith when it was introduced into China during the seventh and eighth centuries. In fact, the word "Hui" actually means "Islam" in Chinese. The Hui nationality originated with Arabs and Persians who came as seafarers and merchants during the Tang period and stayed. The term Huihui, mostly referring to the Huihe people (the Ouigour) living near Congling (former name for the areas west of the Pamirs, the Kunlun and Karokorum Ranges), first appeared in the literature of the Song Dynasty (960–1279).

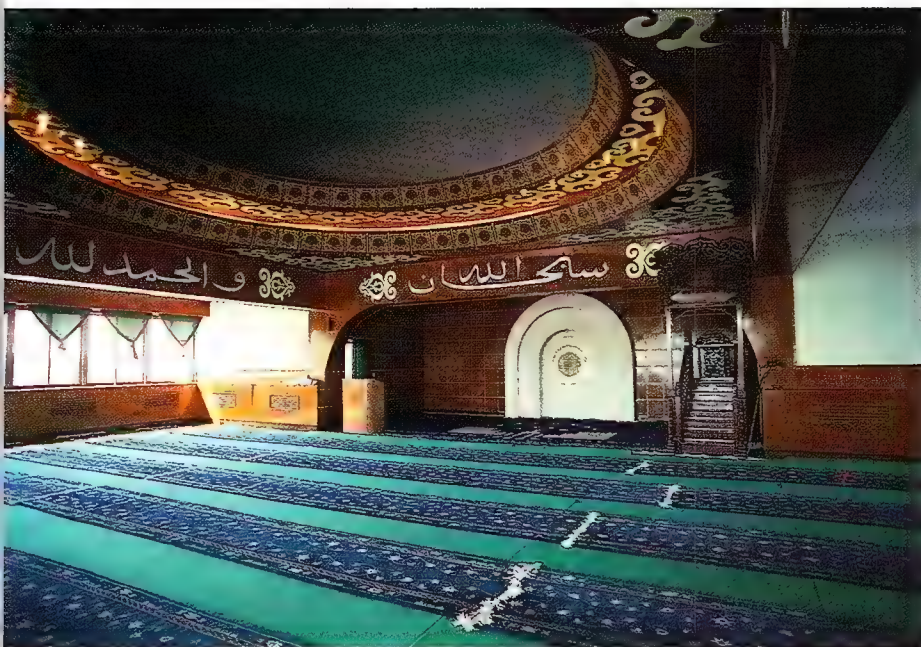
A second and much larger wave of Islam believers later entered China. In the 13th century, having been conquered by the Mongolian forces, descendants of the Huihes began a massive migration eastward along with Central Asians, Persians and Arabs, and became integrated into a group known as the Semu people or the early Hui people. These immigrants turned into China's artisans, merchants and scholars who scattered among Han settlements and absorbed the Han culture in many ways. Quite a number of the Persians and Arabs were conscripted by the Mongols into the military and crafts and moved to regions of the Liupan Mountains and Ningxia Plain. Here they reclaimed land and defended borders. Known as the "Hui Army", these people preserved their faith in Islam and were believed to be the earliest Hui immigrants in Ningxia.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), the imperial court issued the following decree: "Now that Mongols and Semus (early Huis) have settled in China, they are prohibited from marrying within their own tribes." One unexpected result of this decree was a massive growth, instead of eradication, of the Hui population, thanks to the intermarriage between

"Being followers of Islam, the greatest wish we have is to go to the holy city of Mecca to worship our God. Actually, several people in Najiahu Village go there every year. Look, this white hat, embroidered with golden threads on my head, is a present brought by them from Mecca last year," said the Imam of the mosque in Najiahu Village.

Above: The domed ceiling inside the prayer hall at the Ningxia Moslem Koran College in Yinchuan is similar to typical Middle Eastern architecture. Quotations from the Koran are carved around the ceiling.

Below: The prayer hall at the Nanguan Mosque, with its white wall facing west, the direction of Mecca, harmoniously combines Chinese and Middle Eastern architectural features.



the Hui and Hans. No wonder the Hui people I saw in Ningxia closely resembled the Hans in appearance, complexion and even physique. The only conspicuous difference was that the nose of the Hui was slightly larger and more pointed compared with that of the Han Chinese. The only real giveaway of their ethnic identity was that all the Hui wore a brimless white cap.

Another wave of Hui people's migration into Ningxia took place late in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). In the years of Emperor Tongzhi's reign (1862–1874), the Qing government crushed an anti-Qing revolt waged by the Moslems first in Yunnan and later spreading to the northwest and sent 12,000 captives to the wasteland in Guyuan, another 9,000 to Jingyuan, then called Huaping. This forced migration consequently led southern Ningxia to become heavily populated with the Hui.

While visiting Longde, a mountain region, I talked with a number of the local residents and was told the ancestors of these Hui originally came to Ningxia on foot from Shaanxi and Gansu. Since then, they have made this place their home for 200 years.

Most Hui have embraced Islam as their faith. In their customs and habits such as birth, marriage and funeral rituals, and even diet and hygienic practices, they have been influenced by Islamic tenets.

Mosque Resembles a Buddhist Monastery

I visited Tongxin County, over 200 kilometres south of Yinchuan. The country seat of Tongxin is very small with a population of only a thousand people. The downtown area covers just a few blocks. There are not any scenic views to appreciate either. However, few visitors to Ningxia will leave without seeing the mosque at Tongxin, the oldest one in Ningxia enjoying prestige among all mosques in the area.

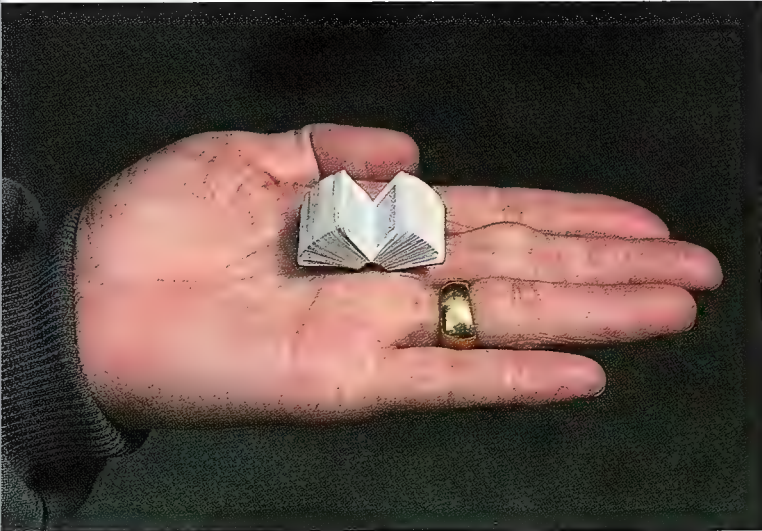
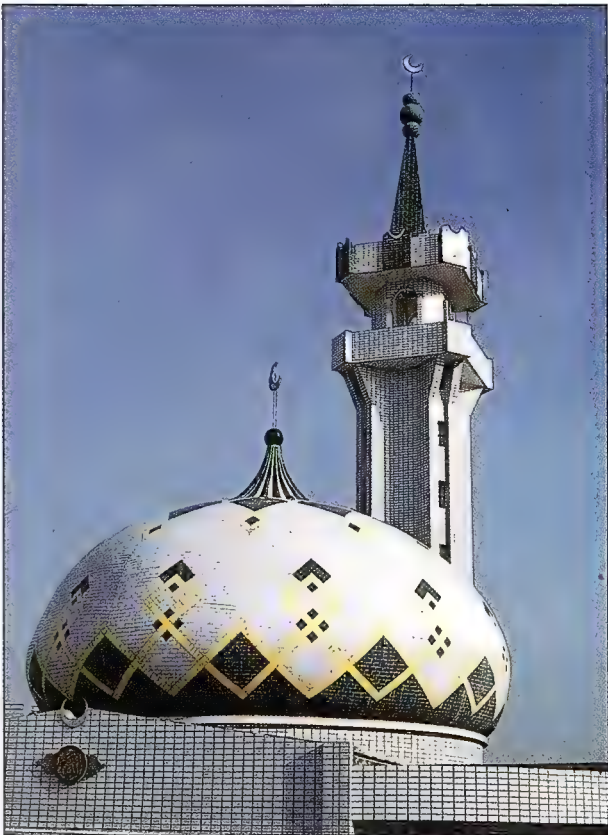
One Friday afternoon, I made a special trip to the mosque to see the Friday prayer or the Djumah preaching, as Friday is the sabbatical day for Moslems. After 12:00 noon, the Islamic faithful in the county town of Tongxin came to the Grand Mosque to undergo *Ghusl*, a shower conducted by following specific procedures, in preparation for prayer.

To be honest, never did I expect to see from outside that the Grand Mosque would look like a traditional Chinese monastery. The main preaching hall was a wood structure built with flying rafters and carved brackets supporting the eaves from the columns, an architectural style typical of buildings in northern China. The hall was nine bays long and five bays wide, capable of accommodating 700 to 800

From outside, the Ningxia Moslem Koran College in Yinchuan looks like counterpart structures in the Middle East.

Above: This Koran, a present from Pakistani Moslems to the Nanguan Mosque in Yinchuan is so tiny that it may well deserve a place in books of world records.

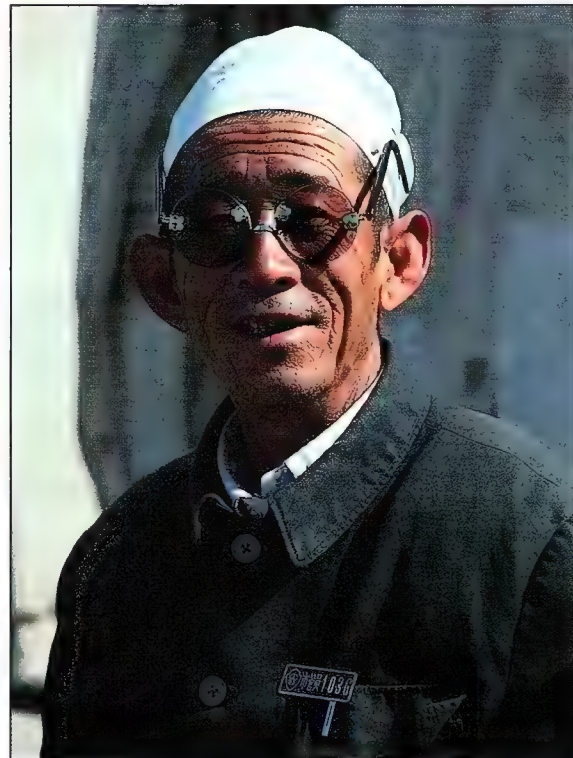
Below: At every Corban, the most important festival for Moslems, thousands of Islamic followers gather outside the Grand Mosque at Tongxin and pray facing west, the direction of Mecca.



Mostly believing in Islam, the Hui in Ningxia pray at home, too. These women are saying their prayers on a kang, a bed built with bricks or stone slabs.



This elder who is a market administrator is dressed in typical Hui daily dress.



Young girls of the Hui nationality wear bright-coloured scarves while married women wear white ones to differentiate their status.

It is customary for people living in cave dwellings in mountainous Tongxin to paste up newspapers on the wall, since they help to insulate the house.

worshippers. Even the minaret separate from the preaching hall was a spired structure of traditional Chinese style. The exact date that the Grand Mosque was constructed is not clear, but it was converted from a Chinese Buddhist monastery during the Ming Dynasty, thereby explaining its atypical mosque design.

Apart from the Grand Mosque at Tongxin many of the more than 2,000 mosques found throughout Ningxia combine both Chinese and Middle Eastern features. Ordinarily, the minaret in the front part of the mosques are mostly like those in the Middle East while the prayer halls further inside the mosques are mostly traditional Chinese wood structures. The Nanguan Mosque in Yinchuan, though, has a striking Islamic architectural feature. The most impressive part of the mosque is several domes decorated in green-and-gold geometric patterns and the lights in the shape of crescents on the spires. This marked a most conspicuous departure from the styles of the Grand Mosque at Tongxin.

I was told that at every Friday (Djumah), Lesser Bairam (end of the Ramadan or breaking of fast) and Corban, the mosques are packed with Moslem worshippers. Imams preside over worship and preach.

Cleanliness Next to Godliness

In the front of the Grand Mosque at Tongxin, a common sight is Moslems donned in white jackets and brimless white caps, a symbol of personal cleanliness. According to Islamic principles, Moslems have to observe either a "minor cleaning" or a "major cleaning", in local parlance *Wudu* and *Ghusl* respectively, before entering the preaching hall.

In a single-story building within the mosque complex, I saw several dozen Moslems sitting around a wooden frame, having a wash, each with a kettle. The procedure they followed was to wash the face first – from forehead down to chin; then the hands – from fingers to elbow; then the head – both hands sprinkled with water touching all or a quarter of the top of the head. This simple way of wash-up or *Wudu* is enough on ordinary worshipping days, while for important ceremonies "major cleaning" or *Ghusl* must be executed by using an overhanging water bucket to take a complete shower from head to toe inclusive of rinsing the mouth. The idea behind the washing is to purify the body just as worship similarly purifies the soul. The kettle favoured by Moslems for the "minor cleaning" has become a veritable symbol of Moslems and their customs and habits, thanks to its widespread use.

"The soil here contains a particular element of salt and grass grown in this soil contains salt. Sheep fed on this grass produce mutton with a natural salty taste," a restaurant manager in the town of Wuzhong told me.

Above: Young girls know how to make themselves look attractive, though they still wear white hats. At their weddings, they prefer white Western-style gowns.

Below: In the shower room, this elder man is executing Wudu or "minor cleaning" before going to pray.



"Either in the goods sold or the selling methods of the market fair in Tongxin, there has not been any great change over the past several decades. Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, big markets are opened, drawing herdsmen and farmers to them to do business. During the slack farming seasons, the markets are even more crowded with visitors," an administrator of the market explained.

Above: The house of a Hui family at Najiahu Village, Yongning County, is simply furnished. Near the wall facing west in the entry way, is a kang, a bed built with bricks or stones that can be heated, here used for prayers. On the wall is a tapestry of Mecca.

Below: A Hui funeral consists of a simple, economic and speedy burial in earth without a coffin as the deceased has to be buried within three days of death.



The Best Mutton in China

The major meat component in the diet of people in Ningxia is mutton and their mutton is said to be the best throughout China.

In the streets of Wuzhong, a town whose residents are predominantly Hui people, Moslem foods are easily found, and those with mutton are abundant. Picking up any menu, you are likely to see hotpot mutton, shishkebab, mutton in white broth and baked cake with mutton. The best quality of the mutton here is that it is free from the strong smell normally found in mutton, and has an ideal texture.

With the change of time, fish which traditionally was not particularly preferred by Moslems has gradually become part of Moslem cuisine. And as a result of changes in Hui people's tastes, mutton is losing its former monopoly of Moslem food. What I liked most in Ningxia, however, is a particular kind of tea drink called Covered-cup Tea. Like all good Moslems, abstaining from either alcohol or coffee, the Huis here have found this kind of drink their favourite beverage. The tea is brewed with jasmine tea, dried apple slices, dried longan pulp, sesame, Chinese wolfberry, oleaster, crystal sugar, raisin and walnut. Its taste is sweet and refreshing. To sip the tea while chatting is a real pleasure and a form of entertainment for the Huis.

Largest Markets in China's Northwest

Since ancient times, the Huis have been good at doing business. The markets in Wuzhong and Tongxin are so large that they are not only well known centres of business in Ningxia but throughout the entire Northwest as well.

Heavily populated, the city of Wuzhong offers plenty of modern buildings as market places where all kinds of merchandise is orderly arranged. In comparison, I found the open markets in Tongxin are much more attractive and have a special appeal. On every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, big markets are opened drawing herdsmen and farmers to do business. During slack farming seasons, the markets are even more crowded with visitors.

Tongxin Market: Trading Centre for Black Moss

The black moss and the Yellow River Tanyang (Tibetan Lamb) skin from Tongxin are the best-known goods. The most frequently visited commodity stands at the Tongxin Market are the ones selling these two products.

The mountains near Tongxin are the habitat of black moss and buyers from Yinchuan and all over

Foodstands in the Moslem markets in the city of Wuzhong open very early in the morning, serving noodles, barbecued mutton, fried crispy doughnuts and more.



The gate to the Tongxin Market has three domes in Islamic architecture.





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This young girl of Hu
nationality is very
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knife. In merely a
dozen minutes, she
transforms the big
piece of wheat flour
dough into finger-siz
noodles.

the country come over regularly to purchase this rare ingredient in Chinese cooking, gradually pushing Tongxin into China's largest centre of the black moss trade.

At Tongxin, people observe a particular way to communicate when selling and buying black moss. Both the buyer and seller squat on the ground, put their right hands under a heap of the vegetable and move their hands in such gestures as to suggest different prices and quantities. By touching the fingers of the counterparts and changing their own finger movements, they negotiate. Once an agreement is concluded, payment is made right away and the buyer walks off with his goods.

Lambskin: Materials for Winter Clothing

Like black moss, the Yellow River Tibetan Lambskin is another item sold and bought in great amount. The population of sheep in Tongxin is several times more than that of humans and the pure white lambskins are naturally a major type of commodity on the market. The lambskins are particularly prized for their exceptionally soft and white wool. Sellers bring in lambskins and sheepskins either by motorbike or bicycle from their homes or pastureland, put them on the ground or on the rack of their bike just opposite the black moss stands and wait for customers. Raw lambskins have to be processed and bleached before being made into shawls or furs for other clothing, which are favoured by many northern girls.

The market in Tongxin is so large that it is very difficult to completely take in within a day. There are stands for selling livestock, timber, clothing, daily necessities, just about anything you can think of. Indeed if you are an impulsive buyer, you might even fork out 500 yuan for a camel as a means of transportation on your travels elsewhere.

Some Huis from Yunnan

During the last few days of my journey, I had a chance to visit Najiahu Village on a Yellow River bank, inhabited by the Hui. The village had 700 families whose ancestors were fishermen in Yunnan. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907) the ancestors migrated to Ningxia and make their living by farming with some sideline activities.

The interior layout of the homes of the Hui people is quite different from that of the Hans. The Hui houses open either to the south or north and the west wall is reserved for prayers, since Mecca, the sacred city for Islamic followers is to the west. The Hui pray on the *kang* or brick bed in the western part of the house five times a day.

Translated by Huang Youyi

"The black moss and Tibetan Lambskins produced in Tongxin are known far and wide. The most frequently visited commodity stands at the Tongxin open-air market are the ones selling these goods," said the market administrator.

Above: The soil in southern Ningxia is particularly good for raising sheep and produces the best mutton in China.

Below: Fresh mutton at the Wuzhong Market



A Water Resort in the Desert A Glimpse



of the Sand Lake

PHOTOS & TEXT BY TAI CHI YIN

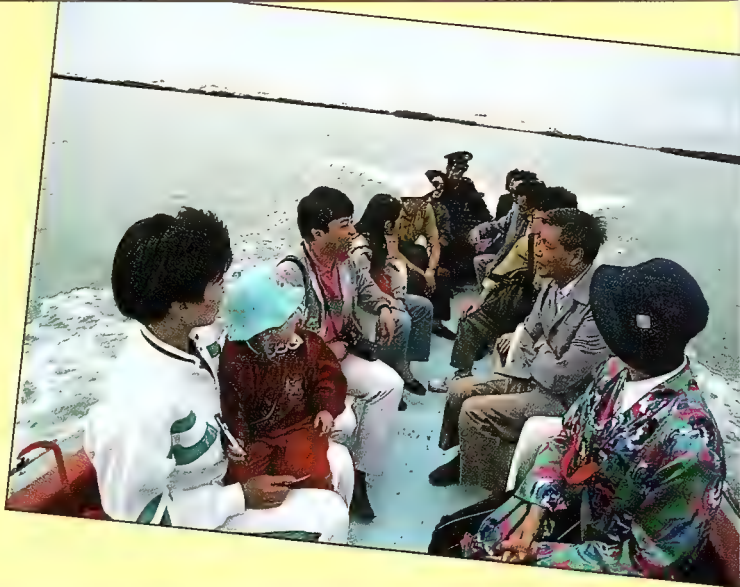


It seems to be calm and tranquil before the daybreak on the lake fully covered with reeds here (by Wang Miao).

It was in September in early autumn when I went to the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Setting out from Yinchuan, capital of Ningxia, we drove north along the highway, which was flanked by ripe golden wheat fields crisscrossed by waterways. In less than an hour, our car arrived at the Sand Lake Recreational Garden located on Qianjin Farm.

A Reservoir Formed by the Yellow River

The Sand Lake, which lies by a sand dune of roughly the same size, covers an area of some 670 hectares. Located 50



In order to get to the sand dune across the lake, the short cut is, of course, a boat ride.

All of a sudden, out of the reeds dart thousands of migratory birds, shattering the tranquility of the lake.

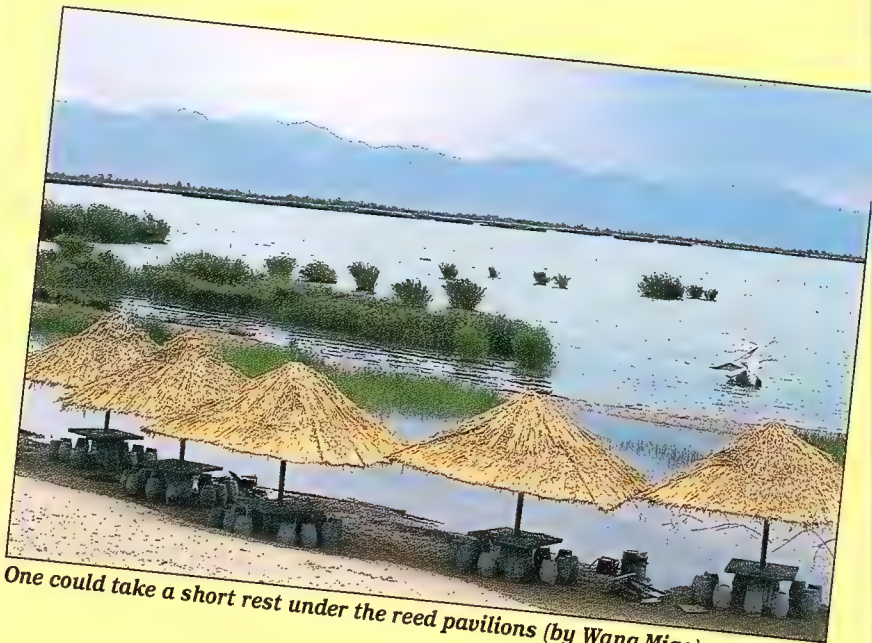


kilometres from Yinchuan, the Sand Lake is surrounded by alluvial ponds and farmland. The Sand Lake has been gradually formed during the last 30 years. In 1952, Donggan Canal, an irrigation channel, was dug in the alluvial land by the sand dune and thus a freshwater lake was formed years later. The sand dune and the lake form a beautiful complementary match. Today the lake is crowded with blooming reeds with clusters of yellow flowers. The water is crystal clear, only with a blackish green tint to its transparency. One could scarcely imagine that here is water from the Yellow River which has passed over the Loess Plateau.

As soon as the boat entered a reed thicket, out of the reeds darted hundreds of black shadows of waterfowl which flew into the sky and wheeled over the lake. The area of the Yellow River Great Bend in the north of Ningxia is the midway station on the routes of migratory birds. During this season, the birds migrating from Siberia, such as white cranes, wild geese, swans and wild ducks, flock here one after another and then fly on towards the south after a break. The place offers favourable conditions for the birds: the reeds are an ideal sanctuary, where they feed on the fish and other aquatic life in the shallow water and from where they go on flying towards the Yangtse River and Dongting Lake, their ultimate destinations.

A New Tourist Spot

The lake abounds in common carp, grass carp and silver carp, most of which seek food swimming near the reeds. With



One could take a short rest under the reed pavilions (by Wang Miao).



Sliding down the sand is a new and exciting experience. All, old and young, like to play again.

a small net, one could round up dozens of kilos of fish. Our boat darted out of the reed grove into the vast expanse of the lake and headed towards the dune at full speed.

Since the Sand Lake was turned into a tourist spot two years ago, during the period of May to October every year, thousands of tourists flock here. Especially during the busy season of July and August, more people come to swim here.

When autumn sets in, the tourists turn to the activities on the sand. When our boat stopped at the moor in front of the sand dune, the passengers hurriedly rushed on to the steep slope of the dune. The greater the strides we made, the easier our feet slid down beneath the sand. With great difficulty we got to the top, 70 to 80 metres high. We looked around and felt as if standing between a desert and a sea.

Here is the recreational centre of the Sand Lake tourist spot. People could not only relax in the sun, but also ride camels or play on the sliding sand. Lying on a slice of wooden lath, and sliding down over the steep slope from a height of some 100 metres, one could accelerate. In summer, people could take part in activities on the lake.

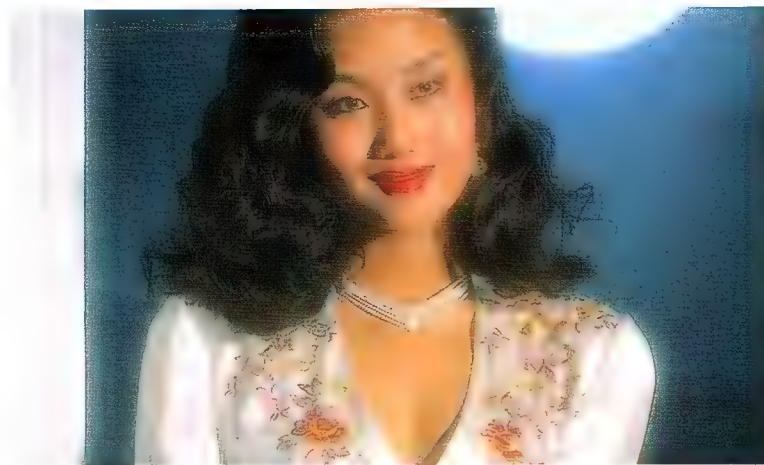
Those who have never ridden a camel on the desert should try it once. The sand on the Sand Lake is blown by wind into the same undulating dunes as those in a more expansive desert. It may be due to the fact that Ningxia was once on the Silk Road starting more than 2,000 years ago that my imagination so readily flew over time and space.

At noon, we enjoyed a fish banquet; each of the dishes we ate was made of fish caught from the lake.

Translated by Gu Weizhou

Only 8 or 10 yuan offers an experience of riding a camel to explore the desert at will.





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Zhejiang "CATHAYA" brand pure silk embroidered blouses have been one of Zhejiang's traditional export items for over 70 years.

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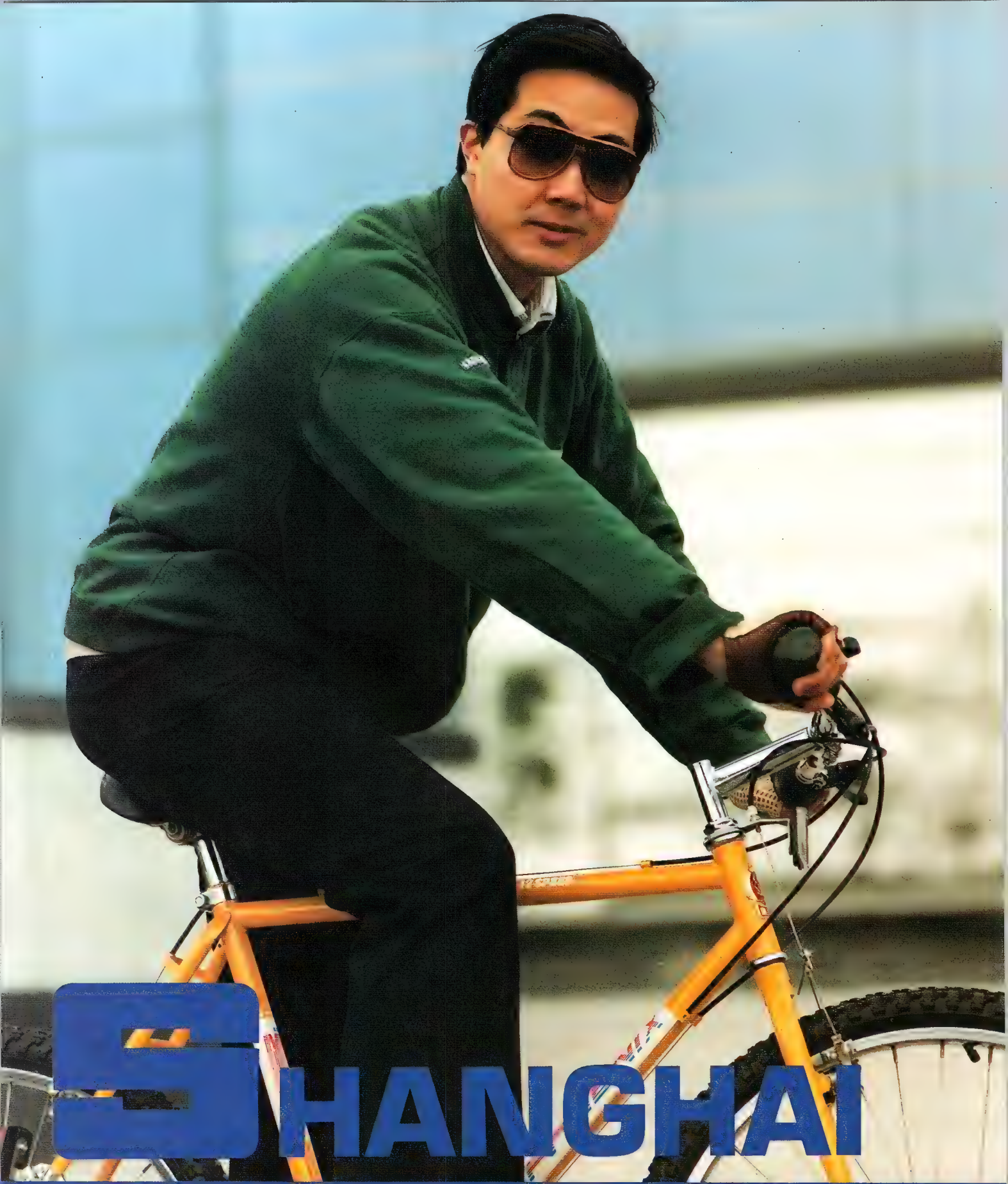
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3801 CHEST WADER	38-48	6	28	26	68 x 49 x 26
IP05 RUBBER BOOTS	22-26	10	9	8	41 x 21 x 36
	27-30	10	10	9	43 x 24 x 42
	31-35	10	11	10	48 x 27 x 49
IP04 RUBBER BOOTS	22-26	10	9	8	41 x 21 x 36
	27-30	10	10	9	43 x 24 x 42
	31-35	10	11	10	48 x 27 x 49
IP02	22-26	10	9	8	41 x 21 x 36
	27-30	10	10	9	43 x 24 x 42
	31-35	10	11	10	48 x 27 x 49
3401-1 3401-2 LABOUR PROTECTIVE BOOTS	38-46	6	13	12	58 x 32 x 31
3402 OVERBOOTS	38-46	6	13	12	58 x 32 x 31
IP10 RUBBER BOOTS	26-33	12	12	11	48 x 23 x 48
	34-38	12	13	12	49 x 25 x 57
	39-42	12	14	13	52 x 29 x 58
	43-46	12	15	14	56 x 33 x 59
3901 INDUSTRIAL BOOTS	38-46	6	13	12	58 x 32 x 31



A Review of the Nantong Art Festival

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY ER DONGQIANG





5



4

It had been my impression that urban people are generally seeking quick success and instant benefits. This impression of mine has changed after I visited the Nantong Art Festival in March, 1991. I arrived there from Shanghai after a 3-hour ride on a high speed hovercraft. Contrary to my expectation, I found this industrial city, one of the open coastal cities on the northern bank of the Yangtse River, has an aesthetic aspect too. I was late and missed the opening ceremony held the previous day. People who had attended the show told me that it was veritably a feast of Nantong's folk singing, dancing and drama including mountain songs from Haimeng, children's drama from Tonghai, fishing songs from Lüsi, antiphonal singing, flower drum tunes from Hai'an and Hualan (Flower Basket) tunes from Rugao.

A Procession of Colourful Floats

That day the art festival put on a parade of colourfully decorated floats. One after another the vehicles moved along the road. The leading one dashed forward as if charging enemy lines. It turned out that the float was captioned "Taking the Lead". That is why it ran like a charging steed. On the car dozens of young men dressed up like stout forest outlaws were performing a folk dance called "Jumping Grooms" amidst the deafening beating of gongs and drums. Their strong bodies swayed back and forth, the

1. The road is packed with a procession of decorated floats which stretches for several kilometres as well as spectators.
2. Beside flowers and birds, characters in folk tales also are the motifs of Nantong kites.
3. The lantern captioned "A Unicorn Sending Sons" symbolizes good fortune.
4. On the car captioned "Joyous People and Leaping Horses" stand a number of comely young girls.
5. The empty cans on the float here serve the dual purposes of decoration and advertising.



anners bearing the emblem of dragons fluttered in the air. The scene was rather awe-inspiring in its own way.

The next float was captioned "Joyous People and Leaping Horses". Though with an equine theme this car was different in style from the previous one. Standing on it were comely girls in tight white sports trousers and with a white paper horse pinned on their chests. These young ladies were brimming over with youthful vigour.

The third float that followed was laden with multi-coloured empty bottles and cans. After a close look it dawned upon me that it was decorated with all sorts of Meilin brand canned food, a unique sort of advertisement. The caption on the car read: "The Fragrance of Meilin Wafts in the Air".

What delighted the people most was the elephant float. The long elephant trunk moved right and left. Sometimes it mischievously shot out a jet of water. Taken unawares the onlookers' faces were wet with water. However, they were not angry at all for it was a time of merry-making.

As the elephant walked away, a pride of lions came up. Named "Lions Play to Herald Spring", the float was led by a pair of colourful balls. To the accompaniment of percussion instruments, lions, big and small, on the car sprang, tumbled and played with one another, creating a lively, festive atmosphere. The enthusiastic and unrestrained movements characteristic of folk dance are full of vigorous movements reflecting a local as well as the national cultural heritage.

Kite-Flying Rich in Folk Colour

The third day of the Nantong Art Festival featured kite-flying. The site was at the shallow beach of the Yellow Sea in Beiyu Township, Rudong County. There was nothing on the sandy beach except the pungent wormwoods and wild grass. This provides a vast open ground for kite-flying. Another favourable condition is the strong southeasterly wind common in spring in this area.

I went there early in the morning. The usually quiet beach was already filled with a hubbub of voices. Colourfully dressed people surrounded the kite-flying ground. Late comers had to run up a small slope to view from the rape fields. I joined them too.

Kite-flying in Nantong has a long history. Formerly, it was to worship and avert misfortunes. Legend has it that the kite is the incarnation of the White Tiger Star. The long string for flying the kite is used to send the White Tiger Star back to Heaven. People used to paste images of divine horses or paint images of gods on the kites to frighten away monsters and devils. They also installed whistles on the kites so that aided by the wind the kites gave out sounds simulating thunder. After years of evolution kite-fly-



ing has long become purely a kind of entertainment. With its favorable conditions and rich cultural background the kite-flying festival in Nantong has attracted kite-flying lovers from all over China.

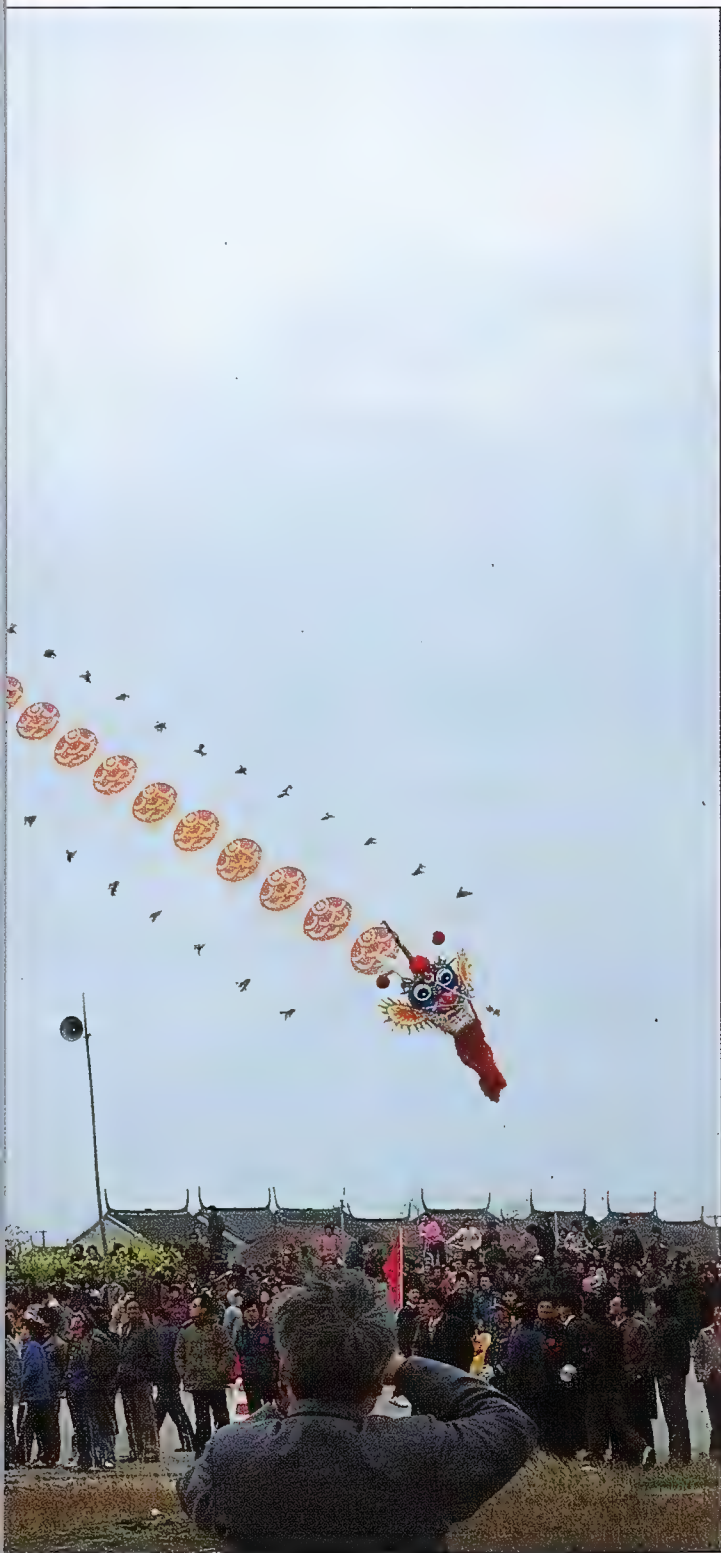
Today, Nantong kites are of varied styles and designs. There are a variety of figures depicted such as painted faces from Peking opera, the fierce general Zhang Fei in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and many others such as gods, divine horses and elephants. Among them the most attractive is the dragon-shaped kite which is scores of metres long. Its long body swayed with the wind, while its big eyes turned accordingly. Its graceful movement reminded me of a popular phrase, "as agile as a flying dragon". Though very long it can be folded up and easily carried off.

The *banyao*, a Song Dynasty style kite, is noted for its colour and sound. Fixed with a resounding bow and a whistle, it gives out sounds like that of bell-tolling and a tra-



1. A favourite of children is the elephant float. A mechanism inside the elephant trunk spurts out a string of water as the car rides on.
2. The young men on the decorated car dressed up like stout forest outlaws are rather intimidating.
3. The "Lions Play to Herald Spring" float is led by colourful balls. Lions on the car leap and tumble, presenting a lively and attractive scene.
4. Colourful facial make-ups in Peking opera become motifs for kites.
5. The golden rape field becomes a good vantage point to watch kite-flying.





1



3

ditional Chinese plucked instrument called the *zheng*. The sound was pleasant and melodious like a piece of symphonic music in the air.

There are big and small *banyao* kites. In the old times it was a solemn occasion to fly a big *banyao* kite. Before flying it was dedicated in the central room of the house by burning incense and lighting candles. It took several people or even a dozen people in two groups and good coordination to fly a big *banyao* kite. At the art festival I saw a 3.5-metre-tall *banyao* kite tied with numerous whistles of varying sizes, the biggest like *duo* or *sheng* which are traditional measuring tools for grain, and the smallest like a ginkgo nut. I was told that there were more than 1,000 whistles on the kite.

On the kite were painted images of fairies, lending classic beauty to its rough and bold outer appearance. In fact the sketchy and free style of Nantong kites represented by the large *banyao* kites forms a sharp contrast with the meticulous and flowing style of the northern school of kites represented by Beijing, Tianjin and Weifang in Shandong.

The reason for the preservation of the Song Dynasty style *banyao* kite to this day is that Nantong has a flat sandy beach which provides a good site for kite-flying and strong wind to boost *banyao* kites.

Festive Lanterns Light Up Everywhere

During the art festival I also witnessed the traditional festive lanterns, a representation of the tying craft of Nantong's people. To display festive lanterns on the fifteenth

- 1. The dragon kite dozens of metres long floating in the air creates a spectacular sight!**
- 2. The dragon head is a three-dimensional moulding of kites.**
- 3. On the day when the kite-flying festival takes place both the Yellow Sea beach and rape fields are filled with spectators.**





day during the first month of the Chinese lunar calendar has been a traditional custom for more than 1,000 years. Festive lanterns in various places invariably combine tradition with innovation. Nantong's festive lanterns have their own unique character. The superb festive lanterns I saw at the art festival epitomized the lantern-making techniques of the country.

The bodies of the lanterns, which were usually made of gauze and silk, were painted and shaped to represent a great variety of characters from Chinese classical novels or auspicious figures to express people's wishes for prosperity. For instance, one described as a "Leaping Carp Lantern" conveys the meaning of having a surplus every year. A "Qilin (Chinese Unicorn) Sending Sons Lantern" symbolizes good luck. The lanterns were hung up on long bamboo poles or simply on the tree branches. As they waved in the breeze they became as if they were real.

Children especially enjoyed seeing the "Automobile Lantern", the "Airplane Lantern", the "Rabbit Lantern" and the "Lion Lantern".

A farmer woman from the suburbs bought lotus lanterns. I wondered why she bought such big lotus lanterns. Later on I found out that in the rural areas south of the Yangtse River it is a local custom to buy two lotus lanterns for married daughters to wish them family harmony, wealth and happiness.

Translated by Anne Yan



- 1. The large-size Banyao kite is fixed with over a thousand whistles which give out crisp, pleasant sounds when flying.**
- 2. White-walled and black-tiled houses in Nantong**
- 3. Extraordinarily large Leaping Carp Lantern symbolizes a surplus year after year.**
- 4. To sample a delicious snack is one of the pleasures of the Nantong Art Festival.**

The dragon on the left outer side of the screen wall (by Shan Xiaogang)



Unusual Five Dragon Screen Wall

TEXT BY BU MING



This rare Five Dragon Screen Wall originally faced the gate of the Xiangguo Temple outside the western city gate of Datong. It was moved to the western courtyard of the Shanhua Temple in 1979 (by Chan Yat Nin).

In China there are many huge walls with dragons carved in relief on them. The most famous one is the Nine Dragon Screen in Beihai Park in Beijing. Datong also boasts a well-known Nine Dragon Screen originating in the early Ming. Introduced here is the Five Dragon Screen Wall located in the Shanhua Temple in Datong in northern Shanxi Province. It is unusual to have five dragons depicted in a work of art.

The Shanhua Temple complex, also called Nansi, the South Temple, is located in the southern part of Datong. It was built during the Tang Dynasty during Kaiyuan's

reign (714-741). It burned down to the ground but was rebuilt between 1128-1143 and restored during the Ming Dynasty. This temple complex is considered to be among the best preserved temple complexes for the Liao and Jin Dynasties.

The origin of this Five Dragon Screen Wall is unknown. Formerly it was a screen wall in front of the Xingguo Temple outside the western gate of Datong City. During the past several hundred years it was reconstructed many times, and distorted beyond recognition. The present dragon screen wall standing in the western courtyard of the Shanhua Temple was moved from the



This yellow dragon in a sitting position dominates the centre of the screen wall (by Shan Xiaogang).




Xingguo Temple in 1979. It is believed that all of the components of the wall and its original construction were executed by human labour.

The Five Dragon Screen Wall is 7 metres high, 19.9 metres long and 1.48 metres thick. It has been constructed using 210 separate pieces of coloured glazed bricks with the dragon's body standing out in yellow, green, red and purple. The colour tones are harmonious, and the dragons appear very animated. They are almost duplications of the first five dragons (from right to left) of the Nine Dragon Screen, at least in terms of posture, except for the fifth.

Of the five dragons, the yellow dragon in the middle is the main one and is in a sitting position. On either side is a pair of dragons in pale yellow, and on the outer side of these is a pair of dragons in a burnt yellow. They are symmetrically arranged. The sitting dragon in the centre raises its head forward as if gazing with pride at the others, while the two dragons on the left side are flying up and down as if to tease each other; the two dragons on the right coil their way forcefully — one appears to be descending from the blue sky and the other to be leaping out of the sea. The entire screen wall is symmetrical and displays a variety of artistic styles in terms of colour and structure. The glazed brick and tiles gleam in the sun, rendering the five dragons even more vivid.

The roof over the screen wall has been constructed so as to resemble traditional motifs in high relief. The base of the wall is built of blue and green glazed bricks. The upper part is carved with repeated motifs of two dragons playing with a pearl, and its middle section depicts images of lions, tigers, elephants and unicorns, all in relief.

It is believed that all the structural components of the screen wall were made by hand using traditional methods. 

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Jiangxi's *Nuo* Dance: From Ritual to Entertainment

ARTICLE BY ZHO



ainment

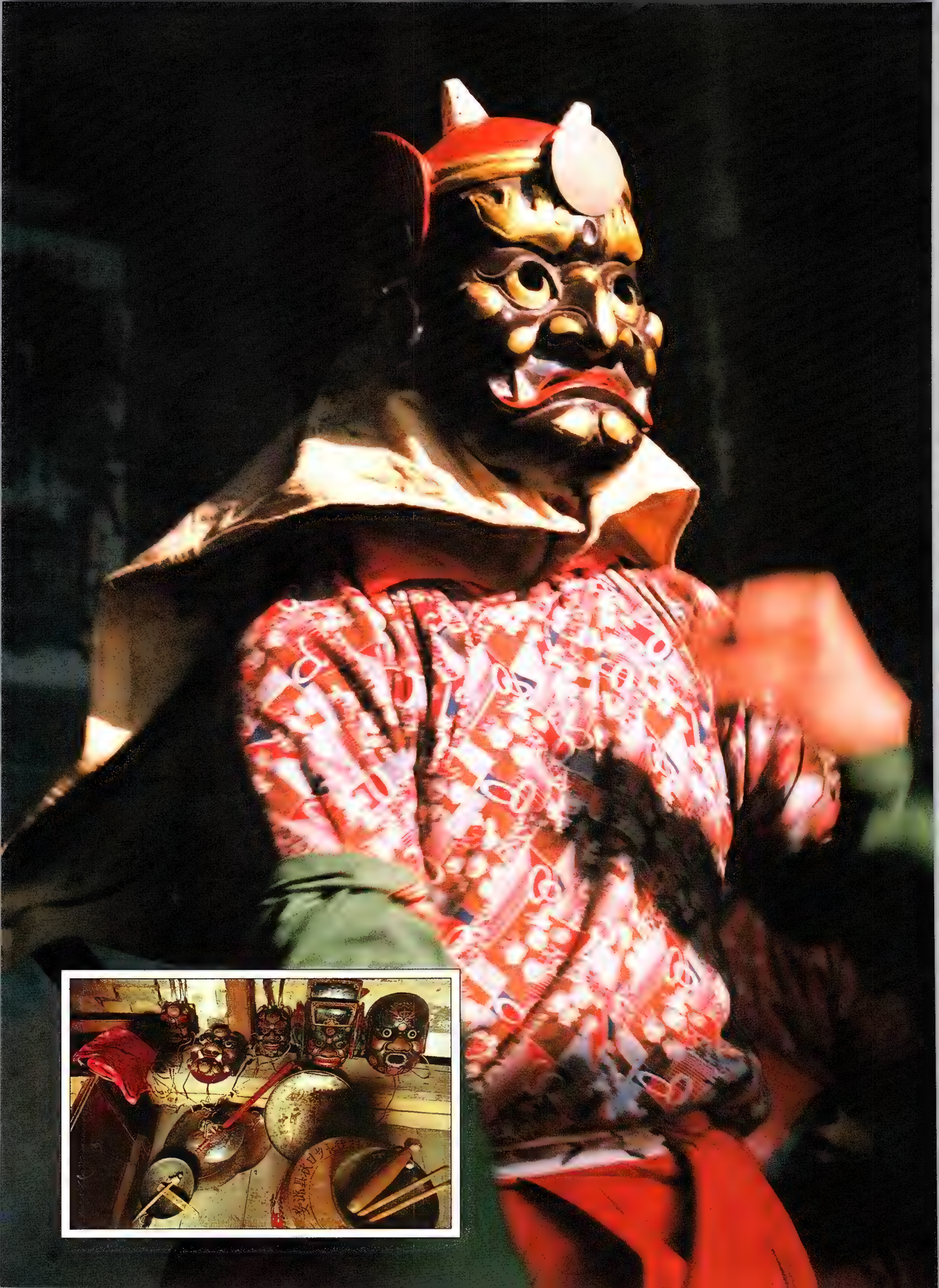
JANRONG & BI XINDING



It takes more than one pair of hands to don this elaborate and grotesque mask for a nuo performance (by Xiu Ling).

Inset:
A mask grins at us from the wall, but who can tell if it is friendly or not (by Xiu Ling).







Nuo is probably the oldest extant dance form in the world. It was designed to exorcise demons and to prevent pestilence and other calamities and to ensure good fortune. Early Chinese literature ascribes its origins to the Shang Dynasty (c. 16-11 Century B.C.) but, according to archeological studies of oracle bones, the origins of *nuo* may go back to primitive times. In any event, it is at least 3,000 years old.

The famous Guizhou *nuo* dance came from Jiangxi. It is recorded in Chinese history that the garrison system was introduced to Guizhou in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) when many soldiers were garrisoned there. There were as many as 200,000 men who were accompanied by their families, bringing the total to around 600,000 people. Most of them were Han Chinese from south of the Yangtse River, including Jiangxi, where the *nuo* dance and drama had been popular since the Song Dynasty (960-1279). It was these garrison units plus Han Chinese emigrants who took the *nuo* dance to Guizhou where it gradually spread to the local minority nationalities.

There are also local histories of *nuo*, that is, local stories and legends concerning its introduction to a given place. Also, in the various places where *nuo* is still performed, there are regional differences in style. Nanfeng and Wuyuan, both in eastern Jiangxi, are the two places where the dance is most entrenched. In Nanfeng, for example, the dance is believed to have been brought there by an official who was a native of Nanfeng. He had served as magistrate of Chaozhou in Guangdong Province, and he returned to his town upon his retirement. To repay him for meritorious service, the emperor asked the official what he would like to take home with him from Chaozhou. The official replied that he would take a troupe of *nuo* dancers home with him.

Wuyuan is another place in Jiangxi where the *nuo* is still performed, although the story of how it got there is different. It was not until the early Qing Dynasty

(1644-1911) when a Hanlin academician, a native of Wuyuan and a chief examiner, set the wrong subject for an examination. Although sentenced to death for his error, he escaped and fled to Wuyuan where he performed the *nuo* to drive away evil spirits and, no doubt, to ensure his own safety. The dance has been performed in Wuyuan ever since.

All *nuo* performers are males who play both male and female roles. Not only are women banned from participation in the dance, they may not even enter the temple, home of the wizard god, a colourfully painted, carved wooden mask. On New Year's Day and on the sixteenth day of the first lunar month, he is carried out for the *nuo* ceremony and then back to the temple amidst the sound of gongs and drums. So holy is his temple, that even robbers and brigands have not dared to enter. According to the *Annals of Nanfeng County*, bandits from Guangdong harassed the southeastern part of Jiangxi in 1854 and 1856. While they destroyed many temples and Buddhist images, they left the *nuo* wizard god's temple intact.

The *nuo*, as it is performed today, is no longer merely an exorcism rite as it now includes drama, spectacle, martial arts and other folk arts, making the performance all the richer in expression and style.

**Clockwise from bottom left:
Props and masks ready for use in the
next performance (by Liu Jiangyuan)**

**A *nuo* performer in mask and costume
(by Xiang Yang)**

**Villagers in Nanfeng surround two *nuo*
dancers during an outdoor performance
(by Zhou Chuanrong).**

**A shaman holds a wooden puppet that is
part of the *nuo*. The puppet comes apart
so that it, like its human counterparts,
can change costumes (by Xiu Ling).**

**The grin is human, but the colour gives
away its true identity as a stylized frog
mask (by Xiu Ling).**





Masks of the Nuo

Of paramount importance in the nuo are the masks worn by the participants. Pan Gu, mythical creator of the universe, is represented in one mask and Kuixing, the Star God of literature, is represented in another. These masks present a horrifying sight, clearly designed to repel the evil forces in the universe. Such masks belong to the "spirit school" of masks.

Other masks represent heroes or warriors from Chinese legends, and performances with these masks, belonging to the "lion school", have become historical dramas.

Most of the masks of the Nanfeng dancers belong to the "spirit school", although many represent people, the old and the young, the beautiful and the ugly. The style is primitive with simple and crude colours.

In contrast, Wuyuan masks are either "evil" or "saintly". These masks are believed to be so powerful that an "evil" mask is removed most carefully from its storage cupboard. The door is never opened too wide for fear that the evil in the masks will get out, causing illness or even death.

At one time, brass masks were used, but, due to an unexpected tragedy, they no longer are.


During the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795), a nuo dancer who was wearing a brass mask could not remove it. He wore it for the rest of his life and was buried in it behind a stone tablet at the front of the temple. No one ever wore a brass mask after that, and the art of making them has long been lost.

At a Nuo Performance

With strong rhythms and deep drum beats, the vigorous dance culminates in a rather mysterious fashion. Scores of red

candles illuminate the temple at night where the dancers prostrate themselves, and, taking on mysteriously changed voices, they pray to the wizard god. They spit sacrificial wine onto the masks before putting them on. As the drums beat faster and faster, the dancers charge the temple gate and frantically rush out of the village which they circle, all the while praying that no misfortune befalls the villagers.

The actual exorcism begins when a proclamation is read by the dancers, saying that there is a god who will devour evil spirits, and if the evil spirit does not depart, the god will pull out the demon's tendons and eat him alive. Suddenly, the dancers jump into the air three times, and, holding iron chains, they charge the village houses. In their now strange voices, they announce that they are driving away the evil spirit.

They continue their exorcism, going from house to house through the night. When they have finished, the dancers quietly walk to the river, where they take off their masks and bury them in the sand. They pray and seek inspiration from the god. While it is still dark, they remove the masks again from the sand and tuck them into the folds of their robes for their return trip to the temple.  Translated by He Fei

Clockwise from bottom left:
This elegant and elaborate Ming Dynasty nuo mask has its home in Wuyuan where nuo is still performed (by Liu Jiangyuan).

A set of nuo masks on display in an ancestral temple (by Zhou Chuanrong)

Clad in an exquisitely embroidered coat and a magnificently carved mask, this dancer performs "Separation of Heaven and Earth" (by Xiu Ling).

Offerings such as these are made before each performance (by Zhou Chuanrong).





Painting Roses

PAINTING & TEXT BY LUO GUOSHI

Pink is usually a colour to be avoided in traditional Chinese painting. If the method of fading is adopted, however, pink becomes lively and produces the effect of softness and gradual transition, so that images in the painting look even more vivid. In drawing flowers, the technique of boneless drawing, i.e., creating an image without drawing lines but relying entirely on application of colours, as well as the method of ink and colour manipulation achieve a particularly realistic and vivid result.

I personally like to draw roses. Sometimes, in order to bring out every detail of the flower at different stage of growth and in different conditions, I get so absorbed in examining the plant that I become oblivious to everything else. Purely by chance, I came across a kind of semitransparent paper which could best present the delicacy of the flower petals which is immediately ruined at the touch of the finger and could be used to provide the quality of dimension. With this type of paper, I began to draw roses in all manners. Before I take up the brush, I would sit still and think hard until an idea strikes me. Then I will pick up the brush and paint just when I am in the right mood and execute as I am inspired to draw.

Blossoming Roses in Snow

This is a painting of roses in bloom during the winter. This is not a traditional motif, nor is their arrangement of the blank space in the traditional manner. Snow weighs heavily on branches and flower petals, but the roses retain their vitality. Blossoming in snow, they display an incomparable quality of beauty.

The painting appears bright and the rose blossoms are meticulously conceived. Warm colours, orange and red, are used for the roses to create a striking contrast with the winter environment and severely cold snow scene, so that one almost can feel the natural fresh air of the scene depicted here. Particularly the roses on the main branch were rendered with deep hues to reinforce the power of the painting and make the images more vivid. What is more, the entire picture is painted in the non-outlining method, enhancing the surrealistic aura of the scene.



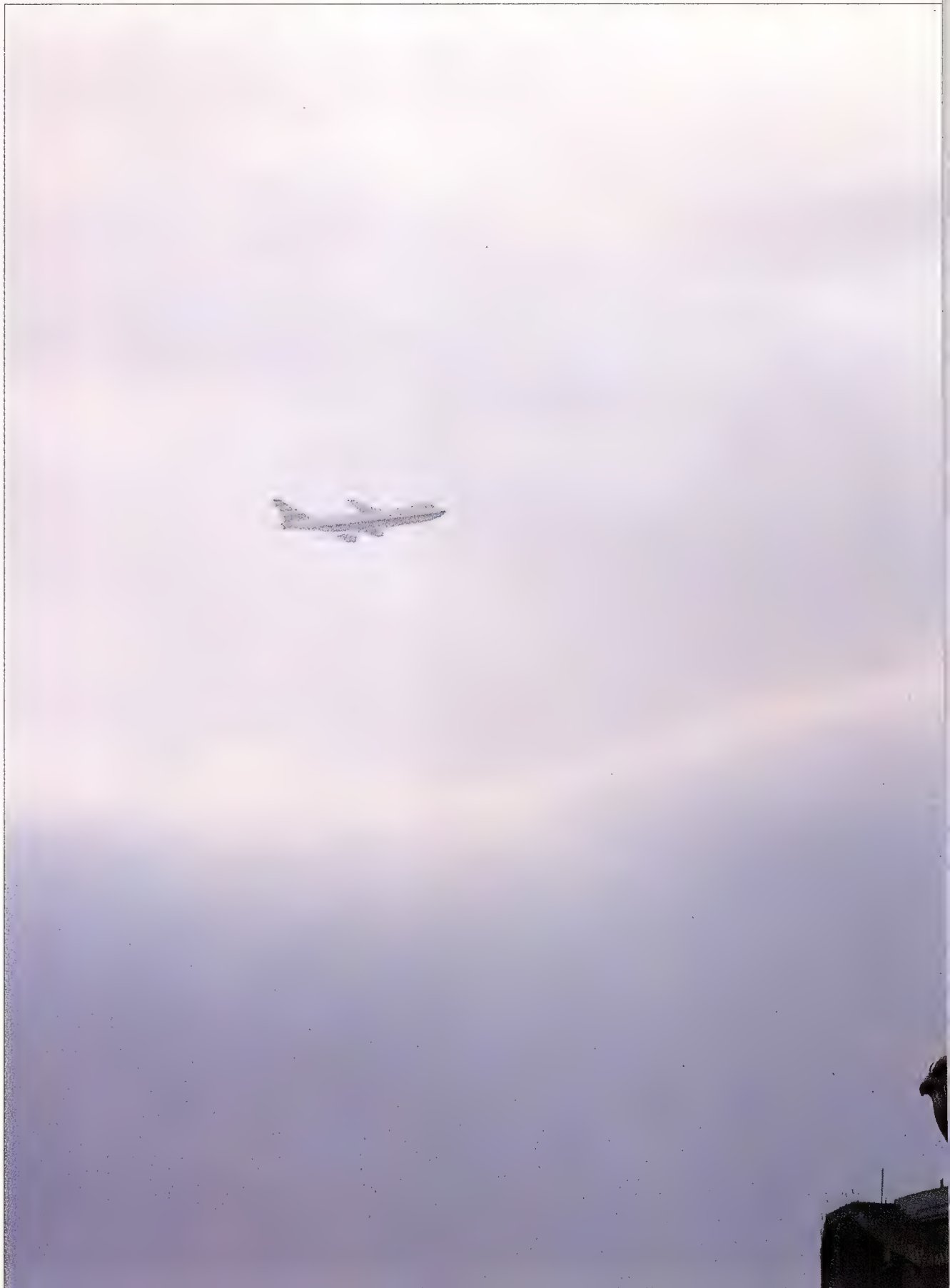


Competing Beauties

This painting was made just after the Dragon Boat Festival (usually early June), 1990. In early summer, the season for roses to blossom, the weather has just turned fine after an early summer rain, the roses seem to have just shaken off the rain drops and the riot of roses seems to compete with each other for freshness and beauty. Some of them are about to burst from buds, some have just unfolded their pistils, others are in full bloom. Bright colours, whites and pastels set off each other. Pinks portrayed here range from light colours to a strong impression, offering the effect of suggesting the frailty and delicacy of the flower which may fall off if there is a gust of wind and at the same time conveying the idea that the flowers consist of many layers. The painting certainly is rich in shades of colours and every rose looks so palpably fresh and real that it seems they can be touched if one simply reaches out his hand. ☐

Translated by Huang Youyi

A Gigantic Buddha Statue at a



The Tiantan Buddha is the highest outdoor bronze Buddha statue in the world (by Chan Yat Nin).

Secluded Temple

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY WONG KIN MAN



It is said that in 1972, the Reverend Zhui Hui, abbot of Po Lin Monastery (the Temple of the Sacred Lotus) on Lantau Island, Hong Kong once saw a huge Buddha in his dreams and soon after some people proposed that a bronze Buddha statue of record breaking size be built on Mui Yu (Wooden Fish) Hill opposite to Po Lin Monastery. The idea was applauded by over 600,000 Buddhist followers in Hong Kong who gathered to pool their resources for the project.

After working hard for more than a decade, the Tiantan Buddha is now sitting on top of Mui Yu Hill on a round concrete base modelled after the base on which the Temple of Heaven in Beijing stands. Soft breezes were blowing and there was a light drizzle of rain on October 14, 1989, the date the topping-out ceremony of the statue was held. Participants later reported seeing a golden ray pierce the cloudy sky and shine on the statue at the end of the ceremony. It was considered by Buddhist followers as a sign of good fortune.

I took a ferry at the break of dawn on a Sunday and started my trip to Lantau Island to see the Buddha statue. The ferry ride took about an hour. After the ferry arrived at Silvermine Bay Pier, I came ashore and took the bus for Po Lin Monastery.

The bus was passing by the Shek Pik Reservoir when a passenger suddenly cried out: "Look, the Tiantan Buddha!"

I turned to look and saw, against the steep slope of Fung Wong (Phoenix) Mountain veiled by a thin film of mist and clouds, the dark outline of the statue with its back facing me. Bright rays from the rising sun lit up its side, causing the statue to radiate with a mysterious glow.



The construction of the Buddha statue proved to be a formidable project as this photo taken before completion demonstrates (by Hou Jinhui).

On the twelve lotus petals are inscribed the names of the sponsors (by Chan Yat Nin).





Although set in a secluded site by the Fung Wong (Phoenix) Mountain, Hong Kong's second highest mountain, the towering Buddha attracts numerous Buddhist followers and other visitors as well.

After turning round numerous corners along the narrow road that twined around the mountain slope, the bus finally arrived at the entrance of Po Lin Monastery at the foot of Mui Wo Hill.

I got off the bus, raised my head and found the gigantic Buddha statue right in front of me. If it had been alive, it could probably have reached out and picked me up with its hand and move me to the top of the hill at the snap of its fingers.

The Buddha, wearing a kasaya (a patched vestment worn by monks), was sitting with its legs folded on the "tiantan" (the heavenly altar) on top of the hill. With a compassionate smile on its face and eyes shaped like the petals of lotus flowers, it calmly looked down at the human race. Its raised right hand formed the "Fear Not" sign symbolizing the removal of hardship and sufferings from the human world. Its left hand resting on its knees formed the "Wish Granting" sign which conveyed its blessing of joy to all creatures on earth. The white stone stairway that leads up to the statue was like a waterfall that "flowed" down to the base of the hill where the statue sat.

Many Buddhist believers, upon getting off the bus, immediately turned to face the statue with their palms put together in front of their chest, and with heads lowered and eyes closed, paid tribute to the Buddha. One old lady even got down on her knees and bowed to the Buddha while chanting prayers.

When the news about Hong Kong's preparations to build the gigantic statue was first reported, some Japanese indicated their interest in the project and volunteered to undertake the construction free of charge provided that the statue be built facing Tokyo. The proposal however, was rejected.

To make sure that the statue would look just right, the Reverend Hong Xun spent a total of three years visiting all the major Buddhist temples in China to see the different images of the Buddha and finally decided that the Raksasa Buddha of the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan Province, which was carved during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), had best captured the spirit of the Buddha and the statue to be built in Hong Kong should be modelled after it.



The ceramic animals on the corners of the temple roof for the most part depict domesticated animals and fowl.



Po Lin Monastery, one of the three famous Buddhist temples in Hong Kong, came from humble origins as thatched buildings.

The big bell in the Mahavira Hall of the temple is rung 108 times a day.

Since the statue was to be built on an outlying island without any protective shelter, it had to be strong enough to resist storms and lightning and erosion of different kinds. Besides meeting all these requirements, the huge size and the complicated and difficult procedures of producing and assembling the parts also added to the complexity of the project.

The statue weighs a total of 250 tons and is composed of 202 bronze parts, the heaviest of which weighs six tons. The statue itself stands 23 metres high and the base adds another 10 metres, making the statue with its base as high as a 10-storey building.

I mounted the stairway with its 260 steps and arrived at the foot of the Buddha statue. There were twelve three-metre-high lotus petals painted gold and inscribed with the names of the sponsors.

Inside the base of the statue, there was a great brass bell whose mouth was shaped like a flame. It stands 3.3 metres high and weighs six tons while the diameter of its mouth measures two metres. I learned that a computerized system would be installed later enabling the bell to be heard 108 times between 11 o'clock in the morning and 11 o'clock at night every day. The pealing of the bell according to Buddhist teachings could drive away the 108 different troubles man may face.

Although Po Lin Monastery is visited by tourists and Buddhist pilgrims today, it was once the site of a simple cottage housing three monks. It was not until 1913 when the Reverend Ji Xiu, a high monk of the Jiangshan Temple on Jinshan Hill at Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province was invited to

become the abbot there that the establishment began to be known as a temple. Since then the present layout of the temple began to take shape and more and more pilgrims started to arrive. To commemorate the honourable deeds of the Reverend Ji Xiu, the preserved body of the monk is still kept intact in a pagoda behind the temple.

I walked towards the entrance of the temple and passed by a group of youngsters who were kicking a shuttlecock and obviously enjoying the game. However, my attention was diverted by the sight of an elderly nun sitting in the shadow of a banyan tree, one hand holding onto a walking stick and the other hand turning the page of a newspaper. Her eyes nevertheless were not fixed on the newspaper, but were focused on the young people who were enjoying their game. Instead of being detached from the mortal world, the nun seemed very much touched by the earthly emotions of the young people in front of her. I learned later that many of the monks and nuns living at the temple had given up their worldly life-styles after their children had grown up.

I spent the night in a guest room of the temple and the cool mountain breeze quietly lulled me into the land of dreams. However, after waking up at three o'clock in the morning, I could not get back to sleep again. I put on a jacket and went out of the room. It was still very dark as I walked towards the prayer room behind the main worshipping hall. I was surprised to find many people standing in two separate groups in front of the statue of Sakyamuni Buddha (the founder of Buddhism) in the middle of one end of the room. On the left hand side of the statue stood



some monks and male believers while the nuns and the female followers stood on the statue's right hand side. With heads lowered and eyes closed, they were chanting prayers and pledging faith in the Buddha. I soon realized that it was the time for morning prayers. Fascinated by the sight, I stood and watched, little noticing the time passing by.

The sun began to rise when I walked towards the outdoor restaurant in the temple grounds. With white square tables and white chairs shaded by large umbrellas, it looked just like any other outdoor restaurant.



▲ *A monk going on a pilgrimage to the Po Lin Monastery.*

◀ *A monk from the temple performing his daily exercises.*

When I approached the counter to pay for my drink, I found that a computerized ticketing system was being used. A monk was walking towards me and at the same time making a call on a mobile phone he held in his hand. Po Lin Monastery, not much different from any other sizeable organization, had its own administrative mechanism and the monk was trying to settle some business with his contact on Hong Kong Island.

Translated by Ursula Yeung



The temple is always kept clean.

How the Dead Were Once Raised

PHOTOS & ARTICLE BY ZHANG JINPENG

Various rituals and customs involved in burying the dead have been followed by peoples from different historical and cultural backgrounds and in different areas in the world. Among the more unusual of these was the encasing of the body in the hanging coffin practised in ancient China. What we knew in the past about it was only that it was the mortuary rite of some ancient races in China. Other issues relating to it, such as how these coffins had been moved onto the high cliffs, remained unclear. Today, however, this age-old mystery has finally been uncovered.

Originated in Ancient Fujian and Jiangxi

On-the-spot investigations show that the hanging coffin interment was once widespread in almost all the ten provinces or regions in southern China. Accurate statistics, however, are difficult to obtain because most of these coffins are hung on high cliffs or in caves — sometimes more than one coffin in a single cave — and some coffins have fallen down under the impact of elements over time. So the number of such coffins existing is still uncertain.

According to analysis of the artifacts in the boat-shaped hanging coffins unearthed in recent years, this rite originated during the Spring and Autumn (770-476 B.C.) and Warring States (475-221 B.C.) Periods. The artifacts in two *nanmu* wood-made coffins discovered in the Wuyi Mountains in Fujian Province are from the Spring and Autumn Period, while the relics in hanging coffins found in Guixi, Jiangxi Province point to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods. Therefore, what is now Fujian and Jiangxi Provinces are considered the places of origin for this unique funeral custom.

A Creation of the Yuyue People

If the above-mentioned place and time origins of the hanging coffin custom are true, then who were the initiators of such a custom? And why did they develop this resource-consuming strange rite?

Historical documents tell that the eastern and southern Chinese coastal regions were occupied by the Baiyue race during this period. One of the peoples of the race, the Yuyue people, lived in what is now southern Jiangxi and western Fujian Provinces. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, frequent warfare between the Yuyue people and the State of Wu resulted in the attrition of Yuyue manpower for military service. As recorded by the book *Guanzi*, the Yuyue people barred boys who had not grown permanent teeth from being enlisted in the army. Nevertheless, faced with the threat of genocide, the noblemen of the Yuyue people had no choice but to shatter off the de-

ciduous teeth of the underage boys so as to let them legally qualify as recruits. The skeletal remains in many of the hanging coffins are found to be those of very young Yuyue boys with their teeth shattered. Those who had fallen in the battles in defence of their land were honoured by holding special funerals for them. Their coffins were hoisted up to hang in the caves high up in the cliffs for the purpose of being revered by posterity and preventing the disturbance of their remains by enemies or alien races or their ravage by animals. If the truth of what is said in these ancient books is still controversial, the remains in the hanging coffins studied by archaeologists have provided convincing evidence for the veracity of written records in such classics as *Guanzi*.

Hanging Coffins of Sichuan's Bo People

Since the Yuyue people originally inhabited the Fujian-Jiangxi area, how is it that they came to spread over all of southern China? In fact, the endless warfare that had spurred the origin of hanging coffin funeral rites among the Yuyue people also drove them to flee their homeland and wander about, diffusing their unique interment everywhere they went. Part of the Yuyue people who had gone upstream along the Yangtse or the Yuanjiang Rivers brought with them the hanging coffin custom to the areas along the two rivers' banks and the Wuxi region, while those who had ventured further to the upper reaches of these rivers became the initiators of this mortuary ritual in the Chuanjiang and the Jinsha River valleys. Other Yuyue people who had reached what are now southern Guizhou and Guangxi or even further south also introduced hanging coffins along their way. In the course of their prolonged and tortuous exodus, the Yuyue people would sometimes mix with the local peoples along the way, such as the Zhuliao, the Wuxi, the Manyi, the Baipu and the Bo peoples. The hanging coffin funeral ritual was adopted by the Bo and the Pu people. However, this rite had been modified to suit diverse geographical environments, which explains the different features of the hanging coffins in various regions. For instance, the hanging coffins of the Bo people found on the crags in Gongxian County, Sichuan Province are mostly hung from the precipices with the whole coffins starkly exposed to view. This is because precipices are common terrain features in that area but with very few natural caves in them the Bo people had developed the "high-racked" style of hanging coffins of their own to suit local conditions.

Coffins Hanging onto Cliffs and by the Water

Traditionally, many Chinese regard it a great fortune if they could rest after their death in a place that would supposedly bring luck and

► Ancient coffins precariously hanging onto the precipice in Gongxian County, Sichuan Province



Sarcophagus dating from the Eastern Han Dynasty found in the Yibin region (by Zhao Yonggui)

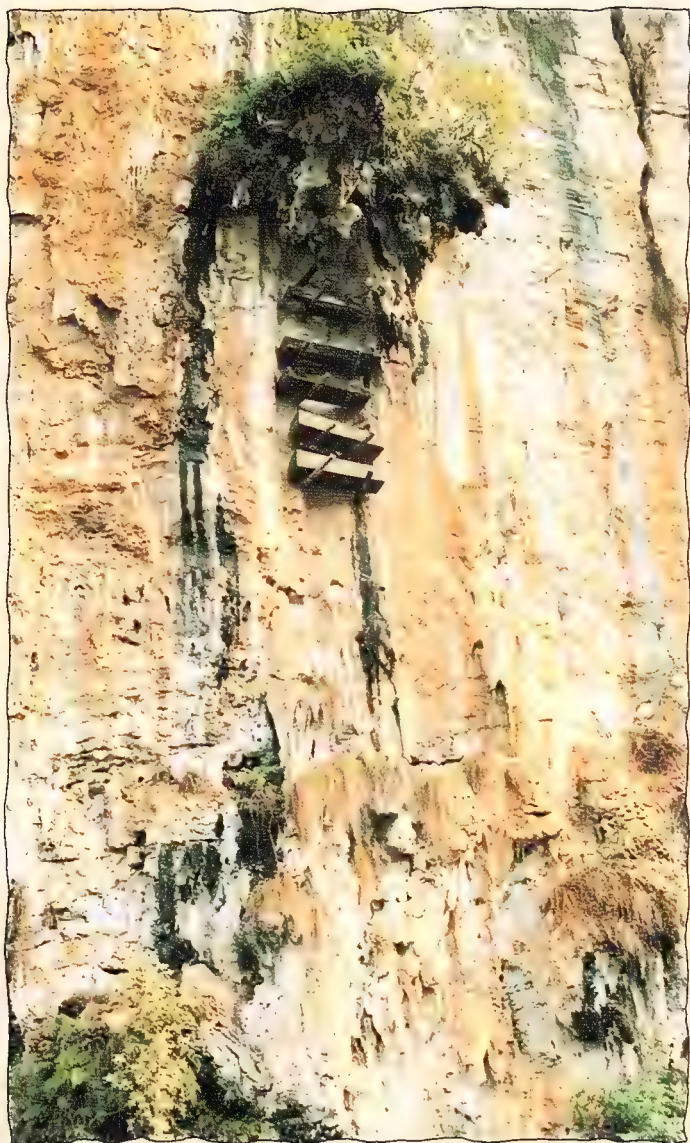
Age-Old Mystery of Chinese Hanging Coffins Uncovered

prosperity to their posterity. Judging from the fact that many hanging coffins are located in the bosom of mountains and in the vicinity of waters, we can surmise that the Yuyue people were so attached to the mountains and rivers that they would not tear themselves away even after death. The logical inference is that the life of these people seemed to be inseparable from mountains and rivers. There is evidence to support this argument: for example, the boat-shaped hanging coffins made of *nanmu* wood unearthed in Jiuqu Brook in the Wuyi Mountains show what almost seems to be a fetish for boats by the occupants of the coffins stemming from their dependence on the water for life. Besides, funerary objects such as turtle shells and tortoise-shaped wood plates found in many hanging coffins unmistakably reflect this concern with water. On the other hand, based on the substantial number of hanging coffins along both banks of the Yangtse River valley, we might conclude that the Yuyue people migrating up rivers during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods could very well be a race living on boats or canoes. In fact, historical documents record that the Bo people who had adopted the hanging coffin rite of the Yuyues were just a people who made a living off the water. Since there was such an intimate connection

between their daily life and water, it would be quite understandable that they would wish their coffin be hung onto the cliff overlooking the water.

Hanging Coffins of the Bo Indicate Elevated Status

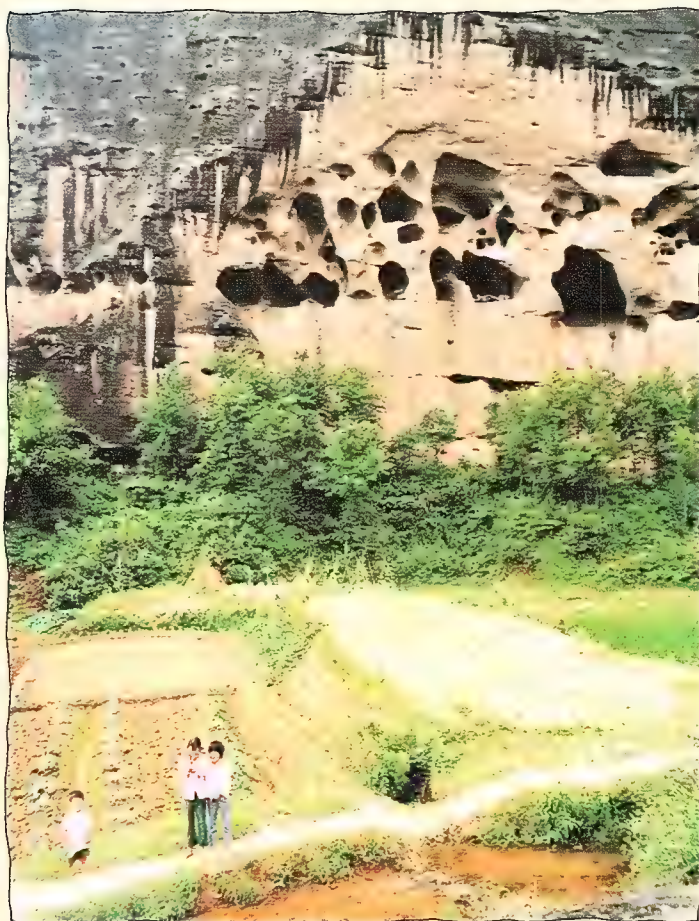
As mentioned earlier, hanging coffins were originally used by the Yuyue people to honour their boys who had died on the battlefields in defence of their homeland. But after the warfare ended, this custom evolved into a means for powerful individuals to show off their wealth and social status, for it would be impossible for anyone without substantial economic capacity and political power to hoist a coffin onto the precipice. The extravagant funerary objects contained in some Bo hanging coffins indicate that the dead interred in this way were important people from the ruling class or their family members. Moreover, the Bo nobles vied with one another for higher elevation of the hanging coffins, because they believed that the higher the coffin was hung, the more fortune and prosperity it will bring to their posterity. As for the Wuxi people, the elevation of the coffin was an indication of filial piety, for they believed that the most dutiful son would be the one who managed to position his parents' coffins the highest.



▲▼ Elaborate designs are carved at the entrances to the caves preserving the hanging coffins (by Li Bozhang).



A hanging coffin on the Dragon and Tiger Mountain in Jiangxi still contains white bones. This is one of the best-preserved hanging coffins in the world.



Many natural caves are strewn in the precipices of the Wuyi Mountains. There still remain caves used for coffins during old times.

Four Ways to Position the Coffins

It is no easy task even today to haul the coffins up to hang onto the cliffs and precipices. As we look up at these vestiges of ancient civilization, an inevitable question would present itself to us: How did the ancients manage to hang these coffins so high? Actually, references were made in a few ancient books. For example, according to *Research on Divinity*, "In the Wuyi Mountains in the Jianzhou Prefecture, sometimes during a stormy night, one might hear noises of people and horses or even music played by flutes and pipes. At dawn, a coffin would be seen hanging onto the precipice." Fantastic as the passage might be it does not tell you in the least how the coffin was elevated. Unable to explain this phenomenon, the author attributed it to "divine power", in spite of the horses. Even today, inhabitants in the areas where hanging coffins are found still regard them with a feeling akin to awe. An old woman living at Sumawan of Gongxian County, Sichuan Province told us that even when precious objects like gold, silver or bracelets sometimes had fallen to the ground from the decayed coffins, the villagers dared not pick them up for fear such profaning of these "sacred" things might bring misfortune to their families.

In other ancient books, four ways of elevating the coffins were suggested, namely: (1) by hoisting, (2) by elevating them along plank roads, (3) by piling up earth and (4) by using the river tide. It is believed that some coffins were carried up along plank roads built close to the face of the cliffs. But it would be hard to explain the existence of hanging coffins in the places where no plank roads have ever been built. The earth-piling method means to pile up earth along the crag so as to haul up the coffin along the slope. This method, however, can only account for the low-hanging coffins in certain places. It would be next to impossible to pile earth along the cliff precipitating right into the water. As to carrying the coffin in a boat up the cliff when the river was in spate, loopholes also may be found. As tides are intermittent, what would one do if someone died and there was not the "timely" tide? Relatively speaking, hoisting up the coffin by manpower was the most feasible way of coffin elevation. But what tools and how many men were needed for the job still remained a mystery until very recently.

Hoisted by a Winch

In 1973, two grave robbers robbed a coffin placed in a cave by climbing down into the cave from the mountain top by way of a rope ladder made of thick iron wires. This case, however, enlightened the archaeologists, who presumed that the coffins might similarly be hoisted into the caves from the mountain top by means of some simple primitive devices. In 1978, a winch axle of the Warring States Period was unearthed at the site of an ancient copper mine in Tonglu Hill, Huangshi, Hubei Province. This provided a breakthrough to uncovering the mystery of the placement of hanging coffins. This technology suggested that in the places where the hanging coffin rite was practised, the ancients might use similar primitive winches to raise the dead, in a manner of speaking.

A period of site investigations and mechanical studies provided some initial clues in solving this age-old mystery. In 1990, some investigators made a hoisting winch modelled on and in proportion to its ancient prototype. The frame of the winch was made of bamboo and wood. From the bamboo mats under the bodies in the hanging coffins of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods, it can be inferred that bamboo and wood were the materials widely used by the peoples practising the hanging coffin rite. The experiment took place at Longhu (Dragon and Tiger) Mountain in Guixi County, Jiangxi Province. A man familiar with the topographical features there and well-versed in the techniques of mountain climbing scrambled up the mountain top and fixed the winch there. Then with a rope fastened onto a tree at the mountain top at one end and around his waist at the other, he descended along the face of the cliff and swung himself into a cave in the middle of it, so as to make preparations for the placement of the coffin there. During the time when the hanging coffin custom was practised, such an agile climber may well have played the role of "vanguard" for a funeral. The coffin was transported in a boat to the foot of the mountain, when a rope was thrown down from the winch on top of the mountain to tie up the coffin. After that, the coffin was slowly hoisted up and placed into the cave.

Therefore, this age-old mystery may well have at last been finally uncovered.

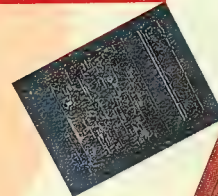
Translated by Xia Ping

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TRADE LINK



Helan Stone Carving (by K. C. Cheng)



Black Moss (by Tai Chi Yin)



Tibetan Lambskin (by Tai Chi Yin)

Taixi Coal and the Five Treasures

Situated on the upper and middle reaches of the Yellow River in Northwest China, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region has been blessed with abundant mineral resources, particularly coal. Thanks to its irrigation system, which has been operating for more than two thousand years, Ningxia's five treasures – fructus lycii, licorice roots, Helan stones, Tibetan lambskins and black moss – are famous both at home and abroad. In industry, the region is active in machine manufacturing and the textile industry. Among other industries, there are also chemical and metal-working plants. Thus, Ningxia offers the businessman and prospective investor a variety of opportunities to conduct profitable trade.

One-Fifth of China's Coal Reserves

Ningxia's coal mines have yielded a wide variety of coal ores, including coal for making coke, anthracite and coal for fuelling power generators. The best-known is an anthracite primarily extracted from the Rujigou Coal Mine commonly referred to as "Taixi Coal". In terms of ease of exploitation, ease of transport and use as well as chemical properties, Taixi coal is a preference for a number of reasons: low content of

ash, sulphur and phosphorous; high heat yield; high specific resistivity; high rate of sizeable coal lumps. Not surprisingly, Taixi Coal has been marketed to Europe, Japan and Southeast Asia.

Fructus Lycii

The fructus lycii (*Lycium chinense*), mainly produced in Zhongning County in western Ningxia, is also known as the Chinese wolfberry, and described as the "Red Treasure". It is brilliant red, with a sweet and fleshy fruit, with a thin skin and few seeds. There are a variety of products such as wine, sweets and even tea. Eating the fruit offers a variety of health benefits, besides tasting delicious.

Xizheng Licorice Root

Xizheng licorice (*Glycyrrhiza uralensis*) root is the "Yellow Treasure" and contains a variety of efficacious compounds such as licorice, carbohydrates, dextrose, aldehydic acid, manna and protein. It has therefore been used throughout the ages as an ingredient for doctors and is known as the king of Chinese herbal medicines. In fact, it is an antipy-



Fructus Lycii (by Tai Chi Yin)



Licorice Root

Some Foreign Trade Organizations of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

Ningxia Cereals & Oils, Medicines & Health Products Import & Export Corp.

64 Nanhuan Road West, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 246937
Telex: 72163 NXOFM CN
Cable: 0004 YINCHUAN

Ningxia Import & Export Corporation

219 Jiefang Street West, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 33275
Telex: 75012 NXIEC CN
Cable: 6651 YINCHUAN
Fax: 0951-34833

Ningxia Machinery & Equipment Import & Export Corporation

Fenghuang Road North, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 33216
Telex: 72174 CMECN CN
Cable: 0656 YINCHUAN

Ningxia Metals & Minerals, Chemicals & Machinery Import & Export Corporation

64 Nanhuan Road West, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 34587
Telex: 70144 NFET CN
Cable: 1120 YINCHUAN

Ningxia Native Produce & Animal By-Products Import & Export Corporation

64 Nanhuan Road West, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 33529
Telex: 75014 NXNAP CN
Cable: 0427 YINCHUAN

Ningxia Textiles, Light Industrial Products & Arts & Crafts Import & Export Corporation

64 Nanhuan Road West, Yinchuan 750001
Tel: 24048
Telex: 75015 NXTCL CN
Cable: 4930 YINCHUAN

China National Coal Imp. & Exp. Corp. Ningxia Branch

2 Wenhua Street West, Yinchuan, 750001
Tel: 26721 Cable: 3561 YINCHUAN

Business Opportunities in Ningxia

retic which relieves internal fever and cough, makes expectoration easy and is also supposed to nourish the spleen and stomach. Licorice root products such as licorice extract and licorice spray are widely used in pharmaceutical production, food processing, aromatic tobaccos, dye-stuffs and print materials.

Helan Stone Carving


Named after the Helan Mountains, after which this "Blue Treasure" is extracted. Since ancient times, it has been sought after as the primary material for inkstones used in calligraphy and painting. The colour is predominantly blue with light green speckles. Fine in texture, hard and not brittle, it is ideal for carving items such as pen-racks, seals, water pots for brushes and a variety of small statues and figurines.

Tibetan Lambskins

Tibetan lambskins, the "White Treasure" of Ningxia, are the skin and attached wool of lambs raised in Yanchi County. The lambskins are light, soft and fine in texture with luxurious wool. The colour is as white as

jade and they have a high degree of heat insulation. Fur quilts made from Tibetan lambskins are carefully fashioned. Tibetan lambskin is an excellent material to use in the production of a variety of garments for both men and women.

Ningxia Black Moss

The "Black Treasure" is actually an alga which the Chinese call *facai* or literally "hair vegetable" because its appearance resembles hair. It is black, with long strands and contains a variety of nutrients such as protein, carbohydrates, calcium, phosphorous, and iron as well as a number of vitamins. It is reputedly efficacious for stanching bleeding, reducing hypertension, stimulating digestion, diluting fat and nourishing the intestines and stomach. Because its Chinese name has the same pronunciation as "making a fortune" in Chinese, it is therefore a first-class treat for guests and a welcome gift on New Year's Day. Processed with special care, it can be easily prepared for eating; thus, it is a popular product in overseas Chinese communities around the world. 



Tips on Visiting Ningxia

PHOTOS & TEXT BY TAI CHI YIN

Though small in area, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region has quite a few tourist spots which have been opened for foreign visitors. If you spend some time to have a close look round the region, you may probably find that it is rich in tourist resources.

Tourist Season

Like other areas in northwest China, the most suitable tourist season in Ningxia is summer and autumn (June to October), when the weather is warm, there is less rainfall, the days are long and the nights are short. During this season, a tourist can get by with a T-shirt at noon and put on an extra overcoat in the morning and in the evening. In both the south and north of Ningxia, the weather is rather dry. It is necessary to take some drinks along. Moreover, to shield the head and eyes from the strong sunshine in the open country, a hat with a sun visor and a pair of sunglasses are a necessity.

In spring, the weather is fine but it can rain a lot and the weather is still a bit changeable. It is rather cold in winter as the temperature drops to below -10°C. Also, tourists would find it dull because activities in tourist spots stop in winter. For those who would like to take a camel ride into the desert, the best time is July and August. After this period, it is too cold to go to the desert.

Transportation

Details of transportation to Ningxia are left out here since they are mentioned in "How to Tour Ningxia" at the beginning of our Special Features section. But it is worth mentioning that from 1992 onwards, there will be convenient transportation links between Ningxia and other provinces. The Baoji-Zhongwei Railway will soon be open to traffic; the road surface of the highway leading to Gansu and Shaanxi is being improved, which

would enable long-distance buses to run more smoothly and regularly. The opening of an air route between Yinchuan and Guangzhou is under discussion. All this suddenly shortens the travel time between other places and Ningxia which was formerly regarded as a desolate and out-of-the-way region and is largely unspoiled. This is no doubt good news for tourists.

As for the transportation within the region, it is very fast and convenient to travel from one place to another owing to the small size of the region. For instance, it takes only a couple of hours to go from Yinchuan to Zhongwei by train. A long-distance bus trip from Yinchuan to Ningxia's southernmost Guyuan County takes only about seven hours. And you can travel from the northernmost tip of the region to the southernmost tip by bus in one day. The frequent inter-city regular buses are very accessible means of transportation.

The transportation in Yinchuan is as convenient. The old and new parts of the city, over 30 kilometres apart, are linked by many mini-buses. The fare for one person is only one yuan. As a matter of fact, the old city of Yinchuan is not large. A walk from north to south and from east to west takes only a couple of hours. So it is quite an enjoyment to take a stroll round the city.

Flights to and from Yinchuan

Route	Days of week	Dep.	Arr.	Flight No.
Beijing - Yinchuan	5 7	10:55	13:00	WH2120
Yinchuan - Beijing	5 7	14:10	15:55	WH2119

(Valid Summer - Autumn 1992)

Route Design

If you go to Ningxia from Lanzhou in Gansu, the first stopover should be in Zhongwei County. Places worth visiting around Zhongwei County include Shapotou Town, the county town, waterwheels by the Yellow River, and the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) section of the Great Wall. The time for the stopover here is three to four days but would be a bit longer if you would like to ride a camel into the Tengger Desert or drift down the Yellow River on a sheepskin raft. For details about the desert trip and drifting please contact the Zhongwei Travel Bureau or the Zhongwei Hotel.

From Zhongwei, you can either go north to Yinchuan or south to Guyuan and Mount Sumeru. Since in Ningxia there is only one highway from north to south, either direction you go in, your return trip has to take the same route as your outgoing route. If your next stop is Inner Mongolia or Beijing, you had better take the northbound route, stopping over at Qingtongxia City and Wuzhong City before arriving at Yinchuan, where you

can board a train to Baotou, Hohhot and Beijing. Most of the scenic spots open to visitors are in the northern part of Ningxia. The southbound route is the quicker way for those whose next stop is Xi'an. Stopovers en route include Tongxin County, Mount Sumeru and Guyuan County, and then on the Baoji, Xi'an and Mount Huashan in Shaanxi and Qinghai Province.

Taboos

Ningxia is the autonomous region of the Hui people. The customs of the Hui people are different from those of the Han people. The Huis go to mosques to attend religious service every day. They never eat pork and they refuse to take alcohol or to smoke. Generally speaking, the Huis are warmhearted, candid, hospitable and easy to get along with. No problems would arise if visitors comply with the rules and customs of the Hui people in specific occasions.

There are over 3,000 mosques in Ningxia. Visitors to mosques must follow the instructions of the administrative personnel of the mosques. Mosques are regarded by the Huis as sacred places. No one is allowed to enter the hall with shoes. And talking loudly is not acceptable. It is considered disrespectful to take alcohol or smoke within the premises of a mosque.

The Hui people prefer dignified and conservative dress in their mosques. Male visitors should not enter a mosque in shorts, and female visitors should wear a veil over their head and face before entering a mosque.

Board and Lodging

Abundant with various produce, Ningxia has been described as "lush southern-style fields north of the Great Wall". Walking in the streets of Yinchuan, the tidiness and cleanliness of the city, the smooth traffic and relative lack of pedestrians are refreshing. There are only a few hotels in Yinchuan, yet they are very clean and tidy. The prices for a room in the Ningxia Hotel, the Helanshan Hotel, the Huanghe Hotel and the Oasis Hotel are all below 100 yuan. As mentioned above, Yinchuan City consists of two parts, the old city and the newly developed area, 30 kilometres apart. The railway station and the airport are situated in the new part while the downtown and historical sites are in the old section. Visitors can take a one-hour trip by No.1 Bus to lodge in the old area. All the above-mentioned hotels with the exception of the Helanshan Hotel are located in the old part of town.

Outside of Yinchuan, the cities and county towns in Ningxia are small, so only a few hotels are available for tourists. Some of these include the following:

Wuzhong Municipal Guesthouse in Wuzhong City, Qingtongxia Municipal Guesthouse in Qingtongxia City, Guyuan Hotel in Guyuan County, Tongxin Guesthouse in Tongxin County, Zhongwei Hotel in Zhongwei County, Shapo Mountain Villa in Shapotou Town, and Xumishan Guesthouse at Mount Sumeru.

Probably because the Hui people attach special importance to cleanliness and tidiness, hotels and restaurants in Ningxia, large and small alike, are cleaner and more comfortable than those in other provinces. Among them, Zhongwei Hotel, Shapo Mountain Villa, Ningxia Hotel and Huanghe Hotel have left favourable impressions in my mind.

There is no clear distinction between the food here and that in the Central Plains. Each hotel has a Hui restaurant and a Han restaurant, the principal difference being whether pork is served or not. In addition the Hui people like to eat mutton so in the streets there are quite a lot of mutton stalls. Tourists coming to Ningxia in summer can enjoy locally produced watermelons. Besides, the rice and vegetables produced in Ningxia are well known throughout the country.

Translated by Chen Jiapi

Major Hotels in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region & Nantong, Jiangsu Province

Yinchuan

Helan Mountain Hotel
賀蘭山賓館



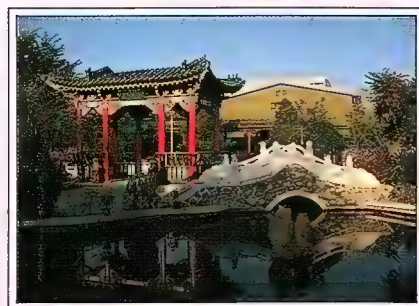
1 Shoufang Street, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750021
Tel: 77301
175 rooms and suites
Located 3 km from the airport, 5 km from the railway station
Facilities: 700-seat conference hall, 14 meeting rooms,
7 restaurants, coffee shop, billiard room, shops,
Taxi service

Lüzhou Hotel

綠洲飯店
Jiefang Street West, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750000
Tel: 34316, 26351

Ningxia Hotel

寧夏賓館



3 Park Street, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750001
Tel: 45131
300 rooms
Facilities: 6 restaurants offering Moslem and Western food,
banquet room, billiard room

Xinhua Hotel

新華飯店
31 Xinhua Street East, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750000
Tel: 31089

Yinchuan Guesthouse

銀川賓館
50-52 Yuhuangge Street South, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750004
Tel: 22442

Yinchuan Hotel

銀川飯店
25 Jietang Street West, Yinchuan, Ningxia 750001
Tel: 23053

Zhongwei

Zhongwei Hotel

中衛賓館



North Street, Zhongwei, Ningxia 751700
Tel: 2941, 2317
Room Rates: Simple FEC ¥90/per., double FEC ¥48/per.,
triple FEC ¥28/per., suite FEC ¥120

Guyuan

Guyuan Hotel

固原賓館
Guyuan County, Ningxia 756000
Tel: 817

Wuzhong, Qingtongxia, Tongxin, Shapotou and Mt. Sumeru are still short of standard hotels, but travellers can rent a room or a bed in one of these guesthouses.

Wuzhong

Wuzhong Municipal Guesthouse
吳忠市政府招待所

Qingtongxia

Qingtongxia Municipal Guesthouse
青銅峽市政府招待所
Room Rates: Simple FEC ¥33, double FEC ¥8-12

Tongxin

Tongxin Guesthouse
同心招待所

Shapotou

Shapotou Mountain Villa
沙坡山莊
Room Rates: Double FEC ¥24/per.

Mt. Sumeru

Xumishan Guesthouse
須彌山招待所

Nantong

Nantong Hotel

南通大飯店
43 Qingnian Road East, Nantong, Jiangsu 226007
Tel: 518989 Telex: 365051 Fax: 518996

Tiannan Hotel

天南大酒店



76 Renmin Road West, Nantong, Jiangsu 226005
Tel: 518151 Telex: 365037 TNHTL CN
Fax: 0513-513519

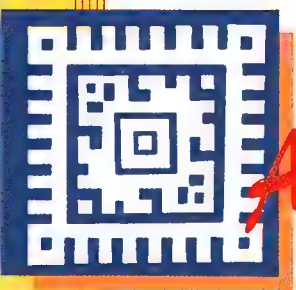
Wenfeng Hotel

文峰飯店



Photo by Tan Jiayan and Xia Pingjian

5 Qingnian Road East, Nantong, Jiangsu 226007
Tel: 517157 Telex: 365019 NWFHC CN
Fax: 510249



A Visit to the Xiaohua Miao Minority

Paul Lau



Married Miao women wear a coil of black wool on their hair to distinguish themselves from unmarried girls.



Crowds of people are gathered at the venue and a group of young Miao boys and girls in elaborate traditional costumes are dancing and singing.

Last year, on the fifteenth day of the second lunar month, I arrived at Shuicheng in the southwestern part of Guizhou Province to visit the local Miao village and see the Xiaohua Miao people celebrating the Tiaohua or Fabulous Dancing Festival.

Situated on top of a hill in Shuicheng, the Miao village was so remote that it seemed to break away from the celestial world. Afar, green hills with a typical karst topography surrounded the village. The tier terraced fields spread out from half-way up the hills, in an orderly fashion. Growing along the intersecting footpaths between fields were either golden-coloured rape flowers or green bean seedlings. There were a few pale violet wild orchids. Spring was in the air.

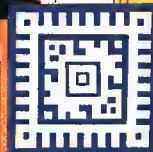
Rustic Lives of the Xiaohua Miao

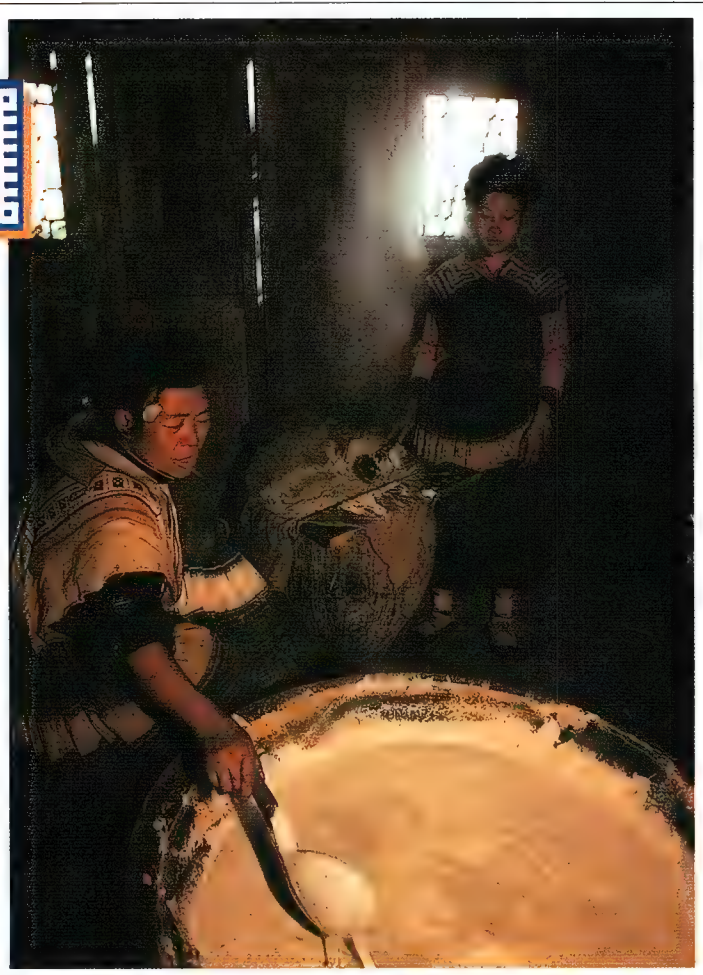
The land here was not as fertile as the place of origin of the Miao people — the southeastern part of Guizhou Province. Thus, the economy here was not as highly developed. The village people did not have silver to boast of, and only ate corn as their staple food. Much of their everyday lives were spent in coal-burning for fuel, kerosene for lighting and carrying water for cooking and drinking. Their existence was so simple as if they had returned to nature.

All the Miao people here had to do heavy and light manual labour. The men were responsible for farming, weaving bamboo baskets and repairing doors and windows, while the women not only ran the household with its concomitant laundry, cooking and baby-sitting functions but also helped with farming in busy seasons. In their spare time, the women liked to gather together chatting while weaving, embroidering or threading. This kind of simple village life and the tranquility found in the hills had given birth to a special life style with traditional customs in the Xiaohua Miao people.



Miao women busy dressing up their children for the Tiaohua or Fabulous Dancing Festival.





Miao women not only are responsible for laundry, cookery and baby-sitting in the household, but also have to arrange for wedding feasts and banquets.

Fabulous Dancing Festival

Once spring was here, the young people of the Xiaohua Miao would be particularly excited about the forthcoming Fabulous Dancing Festival. According to an eighty-year-old elder from the village, this big traditional party started from 1952 with its aim of giving the village young boys and girls a chance to meet and find their ideal partner in marriage.

On the day of the Fabulous Dancing Festival, I followed a group of young Miao girls in batik long skirts of blue and white colours and wearing exquisitely embroidered shawls and hats made from strips of red and orange knitting wool, through meandering footpaths to reach the venue of the festival.

The venue was actually a piece of low flatland between two hills. Atop the hill towards the south stood people of the Han nationality and other minorities who had come to observe the festivities, while the native Xiaohua Miao people either stood or sat atop the hill in the north, chatting and smiling with their brightly-coloured hats flickering in the wind like flowers.

The Festive Trilogy

To the Miao people, the festival was not only to search for an ideal partner and to exchange a keepsake for love. The celebration was divided into three parts — the ceremonies of receiving and planting trees in the morning, the Miao women singing “Songs of Misery” in the afternoon and, last but not least, the young boys and girls choosing an ideal partner in the evening.



At times of festivities, girls from the Xiaohua Miao minority would wear batik skirts and brightly-coloured wool hats.

The tree to be received and planted in the morning is the camphor tree. This ritual carried out is to pray for favourable weather for crops in order to have a good harvest in the following year. The tree was moved to the centre of the venue to be planted. During the ceremony, a group of young boys and girls in traditional costumes entered the venue. They played *lusheng* (reed pipe) in elegant and simple tunes while dancing in step to the traditional *Lusheng* Dance around the elders.

In the afternoon, sad songs suddenly emanated from the hill in the north, dampening the original joyous atmosphere. In fact, these “Songs of Misery” came from married women. Since being married and living in a village remote from their homes, they had few chances for a family reunion. So they took this opportunity to express their love for their parents and the hardships of taking care of the household. At times they all cried out with high emotion. The scene was very moving.

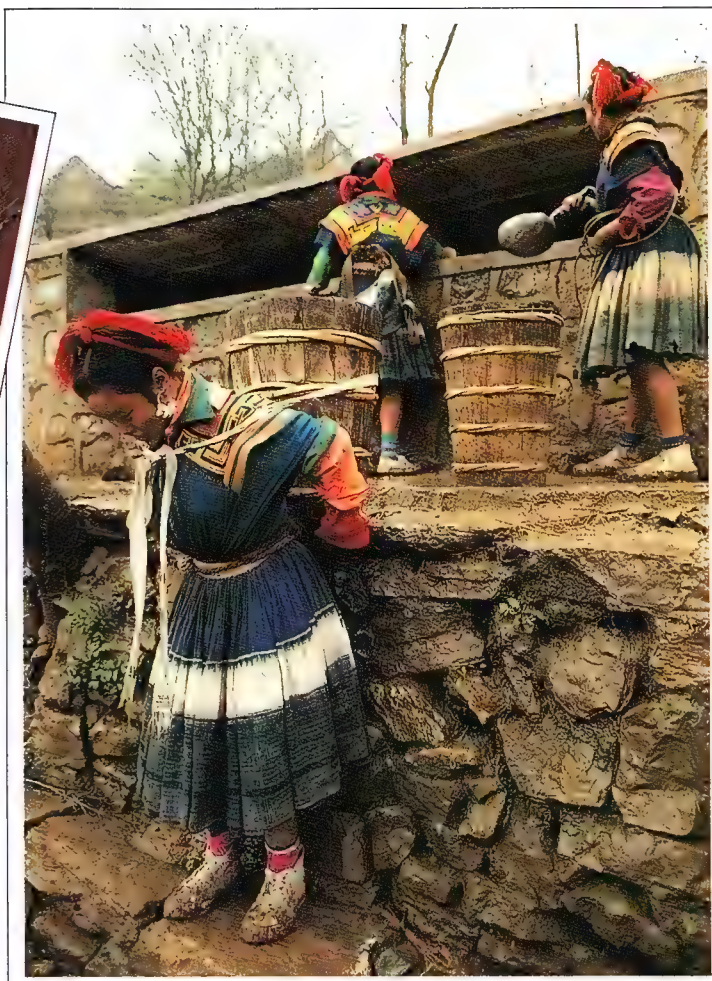
The Miao women wore different costumes. Actually, married Miao women no longer wear red and orange-coloured wool hats, but now tie a roll of black wool to the end of their hair and then coil it on their heads. A piece of black cloth sewn to the batik skirt distinguishes them from unmarried girls.

Miao Courtship Rites

When the sun set and the night began, the Miao boys and girls started to become active. Courting in the Miao people was both well-disciplined and yet open; they would follow the custom of



Simply from the headdresses and shawls, we can tell that the traditional costumes of the Miao men are not in any way inferior to those of the Miao women.



As the economy in the southwestern part of Guizhou Province is not very developed, everyone has to do manual labour.

singing love songs, but choosing their partners was very open. Whenever a girl looked around with love-filled eyes, a boy would approach her softly singing traditional folk songs to show his admiration for her. This was followed by a shy exchange of flirtations. But not everyone was successful. That night, a shy young man was hesitant to sing before the girl he admired. But the girl did not pay attention to him and quickly left.

The Xiaohua Miao girls could also take the initiative to choose their ideal partners. I witnessed a girl taking the opportunity to sing love songs in front of a boy.

Some amusing vignettes from this courtship ritual: a girl pulled on the clothes of a boy to prevent him from leaving in the middle of her singing and to make him listen to her opus in its entirety. On the other side, youngsters in modern outfits were holding cassette recorders to play out love songs, saving their energy. This was perceived as a lack of sincerity and resulted in indifference on the part of the girls.

At night, couples would exchange keepsakes of love under trees and by the campfire. A romantic atmosphere now pervaded the venue.

A Wedding Banquet of Two Days

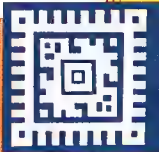
After the festive activities, I happened to come across a wedding banquet in a big village. What is out of the ordinary is that two weeks before the banquet, the bride was sent to her husband's house and escorted back to her maternal home after that. It is said

that within two years after marriage, the bride can live either in her maternal home or in her husband's at her option.

The Xiaohua Miao wedding banquet lasts two days with the first banquet being the dinner on the first night, and then breakfast and lunch feasts the second day. At each feast there would be fifteen courses, all in small bowls. They would include Miao specialities like pickled Chinese cabbage, bean curd, peanuts, thin sheets of bean curd, green peas, potatoes, noodles, sliced meats and fatty cured meat. Though the dishes would not be overly generous, there would be plenty of corn rice made by steaming powdered dry corn and bean curd made from coagulated soya bean milk with pickled cabbage sauce added. As for toasts, they would offer the special Miao brew of corn wine.

When the feast began, I looked around all the tables of the first round and found only all male guests. Even the bride was not seen anywhere. Actually, she had to hide herself at the neighbour's home until the second round when she could re-appear to dine together with other women and children. During the dinner, the Xiaohua Miao people had to knock their chopsticks on the side of the table every time they wanted to take something from the dishes. This was done to shed the small corn pieces on the chopsticks so that they would not fall onto the food in the dishes!

Translated by Wang Mingjie



Yinchuan, Capital of Ningxia

Drum Tower



Legend has it that Yinchuan was founded by a golden phoenix which landed on this tongue of fertile land between the Helan Mountains and the Yellow River. Yinchuan is an airy city, rich in plant life, canals and trees. It is surrounded by a chequerboard pattern of agriculture where one finds rice, wheat, vegetables and fruit trees all flourishing. The city boasts some interesting monuments:

Nanguan Mosque was founded in 1915 and rebuilt in 1981. Twenty-two metres in height, it comprises two storeys built in an Islamic style and topped with a large green central dome surrounded by five smaller domes. The prayer hall can hold about 1,000 worshippers. Around the mosque there is a collection of little shops which attract many people.

The Drum Tower is an ancient building rising in the centre of the city at the crossroads of the main streets.

Yuhuang (Jade Emperor) Pavilion is an elegant Chinese structure, 22 metres in height and dating from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The pavilion has striking roofs with upturned eaves. It stands on a high brick terrace with an archway through which vehicles can pass.

Nanmen Gate is the ancient south gate of



Nanguan Mosque

Haibao Pagoda



the city, often called the "Little Tian'anmen" because of its unusual resemblance to its big sister in Beijing. It was originally built at the beginning of the 11th century during the Song Dynasty.

Haibao Pagoda is commonly called the North Pagoda. The date of its construction is unknown. All that is known is that it was rebuilt in the fifth century (407-427). The present structure is a construction dating from 1778. It is built of bricks, rises eleven storeys and is 54 metres in height. It has on each of its four faces three openings or arched niches with the middle one projecting out, a rare architectural style in China. At each corner of each storey hangs a small bell which tinkles in the breeze. The pagoda, which tapers towards the top is capped with a pyramid-shaped roof on top of which is a green onion-shaped finial.

Chengtian Temple Pagoda is also known as the West Pagoda and was originally built in 1050 in the golden age of the Western Xia Kingdom. The Chengtian Temple, along with

Huguo Temple at Wuwei and the Reclining Buddha at Zhangye in Gansu, was an important Buddhist site at that time. The temple and the pagoda were destroyed in an earthquake in 1738 and were rebuilt according to the ancient design in 1820. It is octagonal, 64.5 metres in height and comprises thirteen storeys with each of its corners decorated with small bells.

Ningxia Museum is housed within Chengtian Temple. It displays historic objects of Ningxia, particularly of the Western Xia Kingdom, the Huis and the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581).

Zhongshan Park is situated in the northwest of the old city, the former summer resort of the Western Xia. The biggest public park in the city, it was created as the result of efforts in afforestation to counteract the encroaching sands. The pagoda in the centre of the lake there houses an enormous bronze bell from a Western Xia monastery.

Photos by Tai Chi Yin

Shapotou – A Bright Pearl on the Railway of the Desert

If you board the train at Yinchuan in Ningxia and travel south along the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway, you will discover that the train is running inside a long corridor of sorts. On the southeastern side of the railway is the roaring Yellow River, while on its northwestern side is the winding, undulating Great Wall. After the train passes Zhongwei Station, you will see to the north a boundless sea of yellow sand known as the famous Tengger Desert. The railway runs just by the edge of this desert.

After a short while, the train will bring you to another small but attractive station. As you look out of the window of the train into the distance, you will see sand-controllers made of wheat straw spread like a huge fishing net on top of the sand dunes. Sprinklers work non-stop irrigating fields full of plants; patches of lush green brambles are in full bloom; sturdy willow trees stand towering into the sky; the narrow-leaved oleasters or wild olives are verdant masses of branches and leaves, with fruit growing in close clusters; luxuriant poplars stand in neat rows on either side of the railway. This is the Shapotou Railway Station, a civil engineering marvel noted for resisting sand encroachment and the building and maintenance of the railway.

The Baotou-Lanzhou Railway is the first of China's railways to run through desert. Built in 1956 and opened in 1958, it is 980 kilometres long. With a section taking a roundabout route along the eastern bank of the Yellow River to evade the Ulan Buh Desert, altogether more than 140 kilometres of the railway goes through the Tengger Desert and the desert that lies in the western part of the Ordos Plateau. The section that is most threatened by the sand is the 16 kilometres around Shapotou.

Shapotou is situated at the southeastern edge of the Tengger Desert inside Zhongwei County in Ningxia. It is on a sand dune over one hundred metres high. The Yellow River rushes like a long sword carving its way through the high mountains and plateaux, cutting off the Tengger Desert and running along its southern side. Legend has it that many years ago Shapotou was once a city called "The City of Prince Gui", with an interlocking network of channels and streams in its outlying farmlands. The people in the area led a peaceful life for many generations. But one day, a gale suddenly arose and swept up yellow sands which covered the sky and the earth, and in no time at all turned the fields into a sea of



Sand Control

sand, which engulfed the legendary city leaving only the sand dune of today. Although it is only a legend, the story indicates the scale of changes of the Tengger Desert, which has expanded rapidly in recent centuries. According to the *Annals of Zhongwei County*, in the 300-odd years since the end of the Ming Dynasty, the sand has advanced over ten kilometres into the county, engulfing 1,300 hectares of farmland and forcing thousands of farmers from their homes.

Similarly, when the Baotou-Lanzhou Railway began to be built in 1956, construction workers fought the effects of sandstorms in both the cold of winter and the heat of summer and levelled the ground by removing the dunes and filling in sand pits. Within the first year, they had constructed a sand railway bed of over 10,000 cubic metres. But the next spring, gales arose and swept this railway bed away. The railway builders were forced to find a new method. They used camels to transport over 100,000 cubic metres of pebbles from along the Yellow River to construct a sturdier railway bed, and this time they succeeded.

The sand dunes on either side of the railway kept advancing, however, expanding at a speed of 35.5 metres a year, and encroaching the railway. After many years of



Shapotou

experimenting, the railway maintenance men found an ideal method to control the drifting sand – planting psammophytes and using wheat-straw sand-controllers.

The idea was to afforest on a large scale the areas on either side of the railway line by planting psammophytes or plants that grow only on sand, as well as yellow willows, brambles, narrow-leaved oleasters and other kinds of trees adaptable to the desert. But such afforestation needed water. The Shapotou area was a desert with drifting sand dunes lying in crescent shapes at a height of 1,500 metres above sea level. The underground water was several dozens, sometimes even over a hundred metres deep. In summer time the atmospheric temperature reaches 74°C, causing rapid evaporation. The annual rainfall is 170 to 200 millimetres, but the evaporability potential here is over 3,000 millimetres. To relieve the water shortage, scientists designed and constructed a large scale project to pump water from the Yellow River up to the 100-metre high sand dune. Irrigation ditches were dug, a sprinkling system set up, and trees planted. This successful project created about 67 hectares of arable land and a seven-kilometre belt of forest.

The straw sand-controllers were made of wheat straw, rice straw or wild grasses which were cut into lengths, one part being inserted in the sand and the other part left above the surface of the ground. These formed a checkerboard network of one metre squares. These straw sand-controllers increased the roughness of the sand's surface, creating a drag effect which reduced wind speed. Once the wind lost its strength, the sand dunes stayed put.

By using these two methods, the drifting sand encroachment ceased, enabling the railway to run unimpeded. During the last several decades a green screen of forest had been created along the railway through the desert, and the sand dunes have been controlled. The straw sand-controllers that were established twenty years ago are no longer to be seen from the railway; they have been replaced by poplars, locust trees, narrow-leaved oleasters and apple trees. Lush green vegetable gardens have also appeared on either side of the railway. Now, straw sand-controllers are installed beyond the green forest belt further into the depth of the desert.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Photos by Tai-Chi Yin



Islam's Major Festivals

As one of the three great religions of the world, Islam has its own festivals of which the Fast-Breaking and Corban Festival are the two great festivals that the Moslems must observe. By and by the festivals have become the national holidays of various peoples who believe in Islam.

The Fast-Breaking Festival


The Fast-Breaking Festival is the literary translation of "Id al-Fitr" from the Arabic language, also known as Id al Festival, the day of celebrating the completion of fasting. According to the tenets of Islam, fasting is one of the five Rukuns (religious obligations) that all Moslems must observe. These are, first and foremost, the monotheistic belief in Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet; praying five times facing Mecca; giving alms; fasting; and at least one pilgrimage to Mecca during one's life. Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a fast month, during which all adult Moslems except the sick, travellers, pregnant women and mothers in lactation (who would make up for it later) are forbidden to eat or make love from day-break to sunset. Only after sunset are they allowed to eat. Every evening they must perform religious rituals, focus their mind on Allah and curb all their worldly desires, all symbolizing efforts to purify a Moslem ill at heart making confessions to Allah, the only God of Islam.

The first day of the tenth month of the Moslem calendar when fasting ends marks the Fast-Breaking Festival. The fasting month begins and ends with a crescent moon. If a crescent moon does not appear on the last day of Ramadan, the festival would be put off one day or two.

The festival activities of Id al-Fitr generally last three or four days. From dawn to noon on the first day, the Moslems perform collective services, known as Assembly Service. These days the Moslems ban all fighting, put on their best clothes and visit their relatives and friends or give feasts and gifts to them.

Corban Festival

Corban is the transliteration of the Arabic word "Id al-Kurban", meaning "offering sacrifices" and hence the festival is also called the Festival of Offering Sacrifices or Festival of Demonstrating the Faith. As Corban is second to the Fast-Breaking Festival, it is also known as the Little Fast-Breaking Festival. Corban is fixed on the tenth day of the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. It originated from the Old Testament story of Ibrahim and his readiness to sacrifice his only son Ismail, following the instructions of a dream which Ibrahim believed was inspired by Allah. Although love is one of Allah's 96 names and attributes, this is overshadowed by the attribute of might and majesty. Even though Ismail received a divine reprieve and a sheep became the surrogate sacrificial victim, this example became the archetype of Islamic willingness to submit to the will of Allah, and is commemorated by Corban.

It is also the last day of the Moslem's pilgrimage which is fixed from the first day to the tenth day during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. As required by one of the five Rukuns every healthy Moslem must make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in his lifetime. On the tenth day of the twelfth month, all the pilgrims, gathered in the Mena Valley, celebrate Corban Festival. That day, the Moslems in every part of the country take a bath, put on their holiday costumes, and bring cows and sheep to the mosques where they are gathered for an assembly ritual. After that, they begin to kill the animals in sacrifice. If the living condition permits, each of them slaughters a sheep and every seven persons offers a buffalo or a camel. Forbidden to sell the meat, they keep part of it themselves, donate another part to the mosques and clergy and give the rest to their relatives, friends and poor Moslems. After the ceremony, they begin to visit relatives and friends. 

Translated by Gu Weizhou

Two Unique Travel Experiences in Ningxia

Taking full advantage of their special tourist resources the Ningxia Tourism Departments have organized two truly unique travel experiences: cruising on the Yellow River in sheepskin rafts and crossing the Tengger Desert on camelback.

Cruising the Yellow River on Sheepskin Rafts

The sheepskin raft is a time-honoured means of water transport, locally known as *paizi*. The raft is made of a good number of inflated sheepskins fastened together in rows on a wooden frame. The sheepskins are usually of the whole animal except parts of the head. The locals call these sheepskins *huntuo*. The safety of the sheepskin raft is not adversely affected by collision or hitting on hidden rocks because the sheepskin bags are independent. On top of these basic structural merits sheepskin rafts for tourists are specially made, measuring four metres long and four metres wide, and composed of more than fifty sheepskins. They are flatter and more stable for tourists to move on. Its head is adorned with the model of a sheep. It is rowed by four skilled natives wearing sheepskin coats and white caps. The long-distance tourist rafts are equipped with comfortable seats and offer food, fruits and melons as well as soft drinks for sale.

The trip to the Yellow River starts from Shapotou. Here tourists can feast their eyes on the peculiar scenery of desert, the Yellow River and the shelter belt – the man-made great green wall. You can also slide down the sand dunes and listen to the sound of shifting sands, inspect the achievement of checking sand encroachment, take photos, or ride on



Camel Tour



Sheepskin raft for hire

camelback. Then you can board the sheepskin rafts and set off on a one-day or two-day trip down the Yellow River. If you choose a half-day trip you get off at Xindun in Zhongwei County. The ferry is 25 kilometres away from the county seat. By taking the one-day trip, you land at the Yellow River Bridge at Shikong in Zhongning County, five kilometres from the Zhongning county seat. The Shikong grottoes lie nearby. The two-day trip will land you at the sightseeing area of the Qingtongxia Reservoir.

The Yellow River tour not only offers you a unique means of transport but some scenic sights as well. Along the way you can see the Ming Dynasty section of the Great Wall, old time waterwheels, oases and other wonderful sights. You can alight at any place you like, take a short rest on the sandy riverside, pick up colourful pebbles from the shallows or have a picnic.

Crossing the Desert on Camelback

To go through the Tengger Desert on the back of a camel, also known as the ship of the desert, is a special tour which can combine exploration of the desert with inspection of sand control efforts. The camels for tourists have special equipment. In addition to better bridles and stirrups they have bags of fruits and drinks and *dalian*s in which one can put binoculars, cameras and other objects. A *dalian* is a long, rectangular bag sewn up at both ends with an opening in the middle. The caravan is made up of those animals carrying tourists and guides and others carrying food and water supplies and tents. The guides ride in the front and camels carrying provisions walk in the rear. The

tourists are thus protected from getting lost.

The tour starts from Lake Gaodun, the fishing ground in the desert, situated seven kilometres away from Zhongwei County and ends at Lake Tonghu in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. It covers a distance of forty kilometres. Various itineraries are as follows:

One-Day Trip Lake Gaodun of Zhongwei County-Lake Tonghu (17 km); Lake Tonghu-Zhongwei county seat (26 km).

Sightseeing attractions: Lake Machang, beacon tower, ruins of the ancient Great Wall, Diaobo Ridge, high sand-checking hedges, checkerboards of wheat stalks used to restrain encroaching sands, desert scenery.

Two-Day Trip Lake Gaodun-Lake Tonghu (17 km); Lake Tonghu-Shapotou (30 km); Shapoto-Zhongwei county seat (22 km).

Sightseeing attractions: Lake Machang, beacon tower, ruins of the ancient Great Wall, Diaobo Ridge, high sand-checking hedges, checkerboards of wheat stalks for restraining encroaching sands, desert scenery, sliding down sand dunes, and listening to the sound of shifting sands, inspecting oases and railways in the desert, cruising the Yellow River on sheepskin rafts.

Amidst the tinkling of camel bells, tourists go through the Sanbei shelter belt, China's man-made great green wall, and can inspect high sand-checking hedges, checkerboards of wheat stalks used to stop sand encroachment and other world famous sand-controlling methods. Trudging among the undulating sand dunes you can experience the drastic changes of desert climate. While taking a meal you may encounter a sand-

storm. Enveloped in swirling sands you feel as if you were in danger. Yet you need not worry. Experienced guides can routinely manage the problem. If the sandstorm is not so violent, the convoy would continue its journey. If the sandstorm is strong, the guides would direct the camels to lie down in a circle to protect you.

The tourist route runs parallel to the Yingshui-Yanjilatu Highway. They are only one kilometre apart. If they like, tourists can alight from the camels and get on tourist cars ready to cope with any contingency running on the highway. Generally, tourists prefer enjoying the fascinating desert scenery, the rhythms of camel rides and camping at the terminal. After the desert tour you may feel tired and find yourself covered with sand all over, yet it is an unforgettable experience which you would reflect on again and again.

Tourists who are interested in these two special tours in Ningxia can directly contact Ningxia Tourist Service Corporation, Ningxia China Travel Service and the Yinchuan branch of China International Travel Service.



Translated by Anne Yan

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Photos by Tai Chi Yin

Scenic Routes Along the Helan Mountains

Standing on the west edge of the Yinchuan Plain, you see a series of elevated areas, high in some places and low in others. These are part of an entire mountain range looming like a fine horse tossing its mane and lifting up its tail. Here are the renowned Helan Mountains in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

A legend frequently told in the region says that the mountains had been once a celestial horse. The beautiful tale says that long, long ago, the place was originally a fertile grassland with a lake that had beautiful blue water in it. Tribesmen called Helas grazed their horses and sheep in the grassland. A celestial horse with the head of a dragon, tail of an ox and hooves of the unicorn was found here. It was also called Hela. One day a horse thief made his way into the pastureland. Seizing the horse, he tried to steal it. The horse got very angry and kicked the thief into the lake with its hind hoof. The thief struggled but got stuck in the mud. The horse, too, trampled on to the muddy quagmire standing there motionless for a long time. Later it was turned into a magnificent rocky mountain. The name of the mountains was derived from the original name of the legendary horse – Hela with a slight difference.

The Helan Mountains are treasure rich in resources. Recent surveys reveal that it has a rich deposit of 300 million tons of coal. Four mining districts have so far been developed here: Shizhuishan, Shitanjing, Rujigou and Hulstai. In addition to coal, the Helan Mountain Range is abundant in phosphorus, high-quality limestone, quartzite and sticky and refractory potter's clay – in fact, a plentiful supply of raw materials for the cement, glass and pottery industries can be found here. Nature has also blessed the mountains with verdant vegetation.

There is a dense forest along Xiaokouzi, where you can see lots of flowers and lush concentrations of trees. There are maple, the leaves of which turn striking yellow in autumn and mountain peach at the foot of the mountains. On the mountains we also

find Chinese pine, masson pine, dragon spruce, and other species. The Helan Mountains are a veritable natural forest park, rich in flora.

The natural scenery of the Helan Mountains are both admirable and glorious, ideal for a summer retreat. As early as 900 years ago, the founding king of the Western Xia, Li Yuanhao, had built palaces in Dashuikou and Baisikou as a place for rest during his royal tour and as his summer retreat. But the palaces can no longer be seen. The place is now being considered to be earmarked as a natural scenic district for tourism.

Xiaogunzhongkou Scenic District

Xiaogunzhongkou, popularly known as Xiaokouzi, is at the eastern foothills of the mountain range, 33 kilometres from Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia. In shape it resembles a huge bell lying horizontally. The entrance to the Helan Mountains is surrounded by ranges on three sides. The opening is in the east. In the centre is a small peak, standing in isolation, called Mount Zhongling, which resembles a mallet or hammer on a huge bell. On this account the entrance earns its name – Gunzhongkou. This was the place where Li Yuanhao, king of Western Xia, had built his palaces. It has now been converted into a tourist scenic district, with an asphalt road leading to the mountain top.

Xiaogunzhongkou abounds in temples and other edifices: Laojuntang or the Hall dedicated to Laozi, famed Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoist philosophy; Doumu Place, Dabei Pavilion, Helan Temple, Xiaodongtian, Yuwang Terrace, Xinglong Monastery, and Wancui Pavilion – all built in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Standing against the mountainside they seem intricately arranged into an integrated unit, where mountain, rock, wood and spring are combined to good advantage.

The national hero Yue Fei, remembered for his patriotism and brave fight against the intruding Jin tribe, who overran northern China during the Song Dynasty (960-1279),

is said to have actually fought in the Helan Mountains. The Helan Temple, where his icon is enshrined, is divided into three tiers of buildings, each with its own hall and courtyard. Alongside Yue Fei, another hero, Guan Yu, a warrior of the Three Kingdoms period, is also deified.

Below the Helan Temple stands a mosque, where a Yemenite patriarch is entombed. The patriarch came to China from the Middle East at the end of the 16th century to propagate Islam in China. He worked among the Chinese in Yinchuan and elsewhere for a period of 30 years. On July 13, 1628 he died. To honour his memory Islamic believers built a mosque in the beautiful mountains of Helan and had him buried there. The mosque attracts many pilgrims of the religion.

On the right side in front of the Helan Temple stands the Bijia Peak, which the Chinese liken to a brush rest. Ascending the peak one has the feeling that the universe is so much larger and from this perspective mountains and rivers appear even more majestic and picturesque. There is a small pavilion on the peak, known as Wanghai (Sea Viewing) Pavilion, from where one sometimes sees a sea of fleeting clouds. The universe is thought to be one, with the earth and sky fused together.

The Dasigou to the north of Gunzhongkou features many rocks in strange formation, some resembling lions roaring, others looking like monkeys at play and yet more appearing like celestial beings pointing the way to Heaven. These odd rocks have rather unusual shapes, and each is different from the other. The ancient temple in Dasigou has totally collapsed, leaving only part of the front wall and the base of the wall standing in its ruins. The scattered broken bricks and tiles indicate that they were part of Ming Dynasty architecture.

Rock Paintings in Helan Mountains

Thousands of ancient rock paintings have been discovered in recent years at more than ten entrances to the Helan Mountains

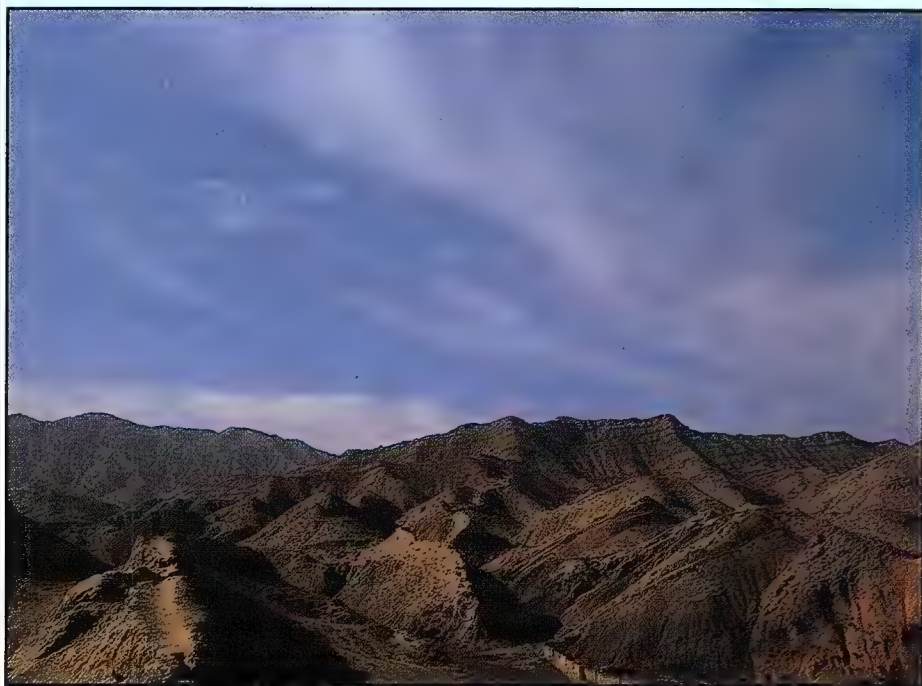


Photo by Tai Chi Yin

extending from Shizuishan in the north to Zhongwei in the south. Most of them are in Jinshan Village under the administration of Helan County near the Twin Pagodas in Baisikou. Jinshan, as a result, is now called the Rock Painting Village. The carved paintings done on consolidated rocks are found in six places: Helankou, Suyukou, Huihuigou, Chaqikou, Daxifogou, and Xiaoxifogou, which make up a veritable gallery of fine paintings on the life of nomadic people in the region, which take us to very ancient times.

Over 300 paintings are found among cliffs in Helankou at the foot of the Helan Mountains on the east side, distributed in an area 0.38 square kilometres. In large part featuring human face motifs, the paintings surround outlines carved on rocks by means of either metal tools or by using the sharp edges of stones. The human faces thus depicted are adorned by horn, feather headdresses or headscarves. Some faces are characterized by big ears and high nose bridges and are covered by facial hair. In others we see bones being carried in the mouth. A peculiar feature is that for the most part on the human face only brows are drawn, but no eyes. There are also numerous paintings of animals. We find deer on the run, sheep grazing on mountains, dogs wagging tails and horses with a fine mane. Other designs include ferocious looking animals, flying birds and mushroom-like objects. Some of the paintings have inscriptions

written in Western Xia language by the side of the object depicted.


Textual analysis by scholars reveals that the earliest paintings date back to the Bronze Age in China some 3,000 years ago. They make up an art gallery of the nomadic people living in the area including the Dangxiang, the Qiangrong, the Xiongnu, the Xianbei, the Tujue, and the Huihe peoples. The artistic form is rugged and vigorous, and the composition unadorned. The drawing is very simple. The concept conveyed, however, is unique as is also the artistic value. These rock paintings provide a much treasured material to enable us to study the life of Chinese ethnic minorities, their concepts of religion, history, war, animal husbandry, hunting and astronomy.

Twin Pagodas in Baisikou

This pair of pagodas lies at the foothills of the Helan Mountains in a northwesterly direction, about 45 kilometres from Yinchuan. Originally there were about a hundred temples clustered here, known as the Nansi and Beisi (North and South Temples), on which account the place comes to be known as Baisikou, meaning entrance to one hundred temples. According to Chinese history Li Yuanhao once built a summer palace at the top of the Baisikou, but the architecture is no longer in existence today, leaving a pair of brick pagodas still standing in the east and the west, facing each other and separated by a distance of one hundred

metres. The east pagoda is octagonal, with 13 densely constructed eaves. The tower measures 45 metres in height and stands on a base in the shape of lotus petals being opened up. The petals are arranged one on top of the other. Under each eave are found two animal faces carved on bricks, giving an angry and terrifying expression. The inside of the pagoda is hollow with a thick wall. Each storey is wooden floored, and each one once could be climbed by means of a ladder. The west pagoda, 14 storeys tall, is similar in structure. Beneath each eave is a shallow niche with a Buddha sitting or standing in each. The Buddhas are in different postures and contain different features. At one corner of each storey of the pagoda is another Buddha. On both sides of each niche are bricks with carved animal heads. In the mouth of the animal are beautiful carvings of balls hung in a string.

Precipice at Suyukou

The most hazardous journey in the Helan Mountains is in the middle section which is hardly accessible by car. The range is particularly high here reaching an elevation of 2,000-2,500 metres above sea level. The peaks rise one after another and the gullies are very deep. The bus or car can only take you to Suyukou, about halfway up into the mountain range. You have to leave the vehicle and climb the cliff yourself. The precipice here is rather dangerous as they rise very steeply. But you can make your ascent to the top gradually and safely from the side. Looking eastward on the peak of the mountains the Yellow River comes to view, very much like a Chinese jade girdle, which bisects the fertile blue-green Yinchuan Plain. Turning west you will see camels and cattle roaming in the distant pastureland under the blue sky with white clouds. The valley is carpeted by pine trees. If you are lucky enough you will see strange rings of light in different colours, in which shadowy figures of men appear as if in a fairyland. 

Translated by He Fei

Other Picturesque Sites in Ningxia

Mount Sumeru Grottoes

The Mount Sumeru Grottoes are situated on the slopes of Mount Sumeru 50 kilometres northwest of Guyuan in southern Ningxia. Their shape and style combine to make them comparable to the more famous Yungang and Longmen Grottoes.

There are altogether 132 grottoes carved out of the sides of five peaks, sheltering about three hundred Buddhas which are in more or less a good state of preservation. They date from the fifth to the tenth century, that is to say, during the Northern Wei, the Sui and the Tang Dynasties.

Inscriptions to be found there are in Chinese, Tibetan and Tangut. The Northern Wei (386-534) was the dynasty which pro-



pagated Buddhism in China and it was the Northern Wei which was responsible for starting the famous Yungang Grottoes.

The Northern Wei grottoes often consist of two halls with statues in the centre. The Buddha statues with their broad round or squarish face have the passive half-smile and serene characteristics typical of the Northern Wei. Some of the grottoes have preserved their frescoes depicting musicians and flying apsaras on the walls and pillars. Notable in this regard are those grottoes situated behind Xiangguo Monastery built in the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581).

Grotto No.5 houses an enormous seated Maitreya Buddha 19 metres tall. A three-storey tower which protected it collapsed in a landslide and it now rests in the open, becoming a well-known symbol of these grottoes.

Gaomiao Temple at Zhongwei

Gaomiao Temple, situated in Zhongwei County, is also known as the Temple of Three Religions, for strangely it serves as a sanctuary for Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Built during the years 1403-1424 on a 4,000-square-metre site, it is a wonderful complex of halls, pavilions, towers and lofty galleries with delicately upturned roofs. A stone inscription there reads: "In this place, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism free the souls of men from hell. Within these walls, nature and man enrich each other."



The pavilions there house statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattva as well as the Queen Mother of the West, the Jade Emperor and God of War. It is indeed a very unusual pantheon.

The Ruins of the Great Wall

The Great Wall crosses Ningxia and ruins of the wall can be seen in several places, with certain sections dating from different dynasties, that is, from the start of its construction during the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.) to the last parts which were built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). These sections of the wall are found in the southern part of Ningxia, to the north of Guyuan, in the west bordering the Tengger Desert, and in the northeast near the Inner Mongolia border.

Photos by Tai Chi Yin

Train Schedules Beijing—Hohhot—Baotou— Yinchuan—Lanzhou

169 F.T.	43 Exp.	Train Station	No. No.	44 Exp.	170 F.T.
17:00	11:01	Beijing		19:50	12:22
21:50	15:28	Zhangjiakou South		14:54	06:53
01:06	18:32	Datong		12:15	04:00
03:24	20:43	Jining South		10:02	01:42
06:00	23:12	Hohhot		07:30	23:02
08:31	01:45	Baotou East		04:56	20:29
09:02	02:17	Baotou		04:26	20:01
12:56	06:03	Linhe		00:29	16:04
16:52	09:43	Shizuishan		20:56	12:26
17:36	10:26	Pingluo		20:01	11:33
18:38	11:55	Yinchuan		19:04	10:22
	12:46	Qingtongxia		17:48	
	13:48	Shikong		16:47	
	14:41	Zhongwei		16:07	
	20:10	Baiyin West		11:08	
	21:58	Lanzhou		09:03	

Exp.—Express
F.T.—Fast through passenger train

Train Schedules Hohhot—Baotou— Yinchuan—Lanzhou

401 O.	Train Station	No. No.	402 O.
11:45	Hohhot		18:26
13:53	Meidaizhao		16:18
15:36	Baotou East		14:27
16:13	Baotou		13:52
22:09	Linhe		07:58
02:06	Wuhai		04:05
04:40	Pingluo		01:12
06:29	Yinchuan		23:38
08:29	Qingtongxia		21:33
10:01	Shikong		20:00
11:08	Zhongwei		18:53
11:48	Shapotou		18:16
18:07	Baiyin West		12:19
19:14	Gaolan		11:04
21:00	Lanzhou		09:28

O.—Ordinary passenger train

Bus Service from Yinchuan/Wuzhong Guyuan/Dawukou in Ningxia

Route		Departure	Distance (km)	Main Station(s)
From	To			
Yinchuan	Guyuan	06:00-12:30 (6 runs)	341	Wuzhong, Zhongning, Tongxin
	Wuzhong	07:00-18:00 (39 runs)	58	Yongning, Yeshengpu
	Shizuishan	07:30-16:00 (26 runs)	103	Yaofupu, Pingluo, Huangquqiao
	Dawukou	12:30-17:00 (4 runs)	81	Yaofupu, Pinglue
	Dawukou	08:00-16:00 (27 runs)	85	Nuanquan
	Taole	08:00-12:00	90/77	Pingluo, Qukoupu
	Pengyang	09:00	390	Wuzhong, Zhongning, Guyuan
	Xiji	07:00	392	Zhongning, Tongxin, Piancheng
	Helan	07:00-18:00 (30 runs)	14	Baliqiao, Majiazhai
	Yongning	07:00-18:00 (29 runs)	20	Wangyuanqiao, Daguanqiao
	Haiyuan	06:30	325	Wuzhong, Xingrenbu
	Tongxin	08:00/10:30/12:00	219	Wuzhong, Zhongning
	Zhongning	13:00/14:00	150	Wuzhong
	Lingwu	08:00-17:30 (15 runs)	60	Yongning
	Qingtongxia	08:20-17:00 (8 runs)	54	Yongning, Yeshengpu
	Pingluo	08:00-17:00 (13 runs)	58	Yaofupu
	Longde	06:15	410	Wuzhong, Zhongning, Tongxin
	Zhongwei	10:00/12:00	167	Yongning, Qingtongxia, Qukoupu
Wuzhong	Dingbian	07:00/11:00/13:00	164	Lingwu, Yanchi
	Baiyin	06:30	375	Qingtongxia, Shikong
	Tongxin	06:30/11:30	161	Zhongning
	Zhongwei	07:00/13:30	122	Qingtongxia, Shikong, Rouyuanpu
	Guyuan	06:00/12:00 (5 runs)	283	Zhongning, Tongxin, Sanying
	Yanchi	08:00/14:00	134	Lingwu
	Zhongning	10:30/14:00	92	Jinji, Balma
	Lingwu	08:00-19:30 (27 runs)	19	Chongxingzhai
	Qingtongxia	07:00/17:30 (12 runs)	30	Yeshengpu
Guyuan	Yinchuan	06:00-14:30 (8 runs)	341	Tongxin, Zhongning, Wuzhong
	Wuzhong	06:50-12:30 (8 runs)	283	Tongxin, Zhongning
	Zhongwei	06:30	233	Tongxin, Xuanhepu
	Zhongning	08:00/15:00	191	Sanying, Tongxin
	Tongxin	08:30-16:00 (5 runs)	122	Sanying, Qiying
	Haiyuan	06:50/12:00	149	Heichengzhen, Zhengqibu
Dawukou	Yinchuan	07:00-16:00 (12 runs)	85	Nuanquan
	Yinchuan	06:30-16:30 (17 runs)	80	Pingluo
	Pingluo	07:00-17:00 (10 runs)	22	—

Flights to and from Xi'an / Hong Kong

Route	Days of Week	Dep.	Arr.	Flight No.
Beijing — Xi'an	4	15:45	17:30	WH2122
	5	15:40	17:35	WH2110
	6	15:15	17:00	WH2104
	3	14:45	16:30	WH2604
	2	07:15	09:00	CA1215
	1	12:25	14:15	CA1201
	1	16:20	18:05	WH2102
Xi'an — Beijing	4	20:45	22:30	WH2106
	5	07:00	08:30	WH2121
	6	07:10	08:40	WH2109
	3	07:00	08:30	WH2103
	2	07:20	08:55	WH2603
	1	15:10	16:40	CA1202
	1	06:50	08:20	WH2101
Guangzhou — Xi'an	2	18:25	19:55	WH2105
	4	15:15	17:35	WH2324
	3	08:30	10:55	CZ3201
	2	17:45	20:05	WH2322
	1	18:05	20:25	WH2304
	5	06:55	09:05	WH2323
	6	11:50	14:10	CZ3202
Xi'an — Guangzhou	4	07:15	09:35	WH2321
	3	07:35	09:50	WH2303
	2	07:25	08:35	WH2431
	3	07:25	08:35	WH2315
	6	07:15	08:25	WH2417
	7	07:15	08:25	WH2853
	1	16:20	17:55	WH2251
Lanzhou — Xi'an	4	07:35	09:10	WH2409
	7	07:15	08:25	WH2415
	2	13:50	15:05	WH2432
	3	19:10	20:25	WH2316
	6	15:30	16:45	WH2418
	7	20:10	21:25	WH2854
	1	18:45	20:25	WH2252
Xi'an — Lanzhou	4	15:05	16:45	WH2410
	5	14:15	15:30	WH2516
	7	15:30	16:45	WH2416
	1	14:15	15:30	WH2416
	2	13:50	15:05	WH2432
	3	19:10	20:25	WH2316
	6	15:30	16:45	WH2418
Beijing — Hong Kong	4	20:10	21:25	WH2854
	1	18:45	20:25	WH2252
	2	15:05	16:45	WH2410
	3	14:15	15:30	WH2516
	5	15:30	16:45	WH2416
	7	15:30	16:45	WH2416
	1	14:15	15:30	WH2416
Hong Kong — Beijing	4	17:35	19:05	CZ310
	1	17:50	19:20	CA101
	2	13:00	15:55	CA109
	3	10:20	13:15	CZ309
	5	12:20	15:00	CA102
	6	17:15	20:00	CA110
	7	17:15	20:00	CA110
Guangzhou — Hong Kong	4	10:20	11:00	CZ303
	1	18:20	19:00	CZ305
	2	11:20	12:00	CZ307
	3	08:25	09:05	CZ319
	5	12:10	12:40	CZ304
	6	20:21	20:40	CZ306
	7	17:30	18:00	CZ308
Hong Kong — Guangzhou	4	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	1	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	2	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	3	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	5	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	6	18:50	19:20	CZ320
	7	18:50	19:20	CZ320

(Valid Summer — Autumn 1992)

Major Restaurants in Yinchuan, Ningxia

Name	Address	Telephone
Yingbinlou Moslem Restaurant	25 Jiefang Street West	25950
Tongfuju Restaurant	75 Xinhua Street East	22316
Wuyi Restaurant	204 Jiefang Street West	25442
Jingjinchun Restaurant	46 Xiangyang Street South	23164

Ningxia's Cities and Counties Open to Foreign Tourists

Guyuan C	固原縣	Xiji C	西吉縣
Haiyuan C	海原縣	Yanchi C	鹽池縣
Lingwu C	靈武縣	Yinchuan	銀川市
Pingluo C	平羅縣	Zhongning C	中寧縣
Qingtongxia	青銅峽市	Zhongwei C	中衛縣
Shizuishan	石嘴山市		
Tongxin C	同心縣	Note:	
Wuzhong	吳忠市	C—County	

Point of Interest at Lantau Island

Silvermine Bay (銀礦灣)

Silvermine Bay, also known as Mui Wo (梅窩), is the major township on the eastern coast of Lantau and together with the surrounding villages and hamlets, it has a population of around 10,000. It can be reached by frequent ferries from Central District in Hong Kong, which take one hour. In the northern part of the Mui Wo Valley there is an old silvermine, now closed down, which gives the bay its English name. (The Chinese name — Mui Wo — means "Five Petal Flower" and is derived from the shape of the valley, which is similar to the five petals of the plum blossom). There is a beautiful beach at the village of Mui Wo, a short walk from the ferry. The Silvermine Beach Hotel, also located at Mui Wo, is an ideal place to get away from the hustle and bustle in town, and nearby are watersport facilities.

The Trappist Haven Monastery (熙篤會神學院)

The Trappist Monastery on Lantau can be reached by taking the ferry to Peng Chau Island (坪洲) and crossing from there to the monastery by hiring a small boat. It is known as the Trappist Haven of Our Lady of Llesse and was officially opened in 1956. The Trappist Cistercian Order was established by a French cleric, Armand de Rance, in 1644. It is one of the most austere of the orders of the Roman Catholic Church. In all there are about 70 Trappist monasteries throughout the world. The Lantau order was originally established in Beijing. The monks, who work mostly in silence, run a dairy farm and sell the milk locally. It is possible to stay at the monastery, but applications must be made in advance to the Grand Master, Trappist Haven, Lantau Island, P.O. Box 5, Peng Chau, Hong Kong.

Shek Pik Reservoir (石壁水塘)

From Silvermine Bay there is a bus service along South Lantau Road passing 3.2 km along

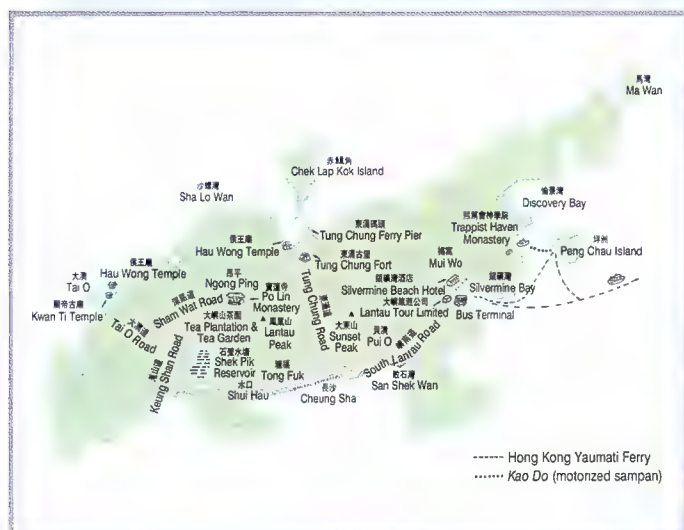
the beach of Cheung Sha (長沙) and the Shek Pik Reservoir (see Lantau bus schedule available from HKTA). There is a lovely view of the area from the road which climbs the steep hillside to the Po Lin Monastery (寶蓮寺). The reservoir was completed in 1963, when a 54.3 metres high earth dam was constructed across the Shek Pik Valley. It has a storage capacity of 2.4 million litres. There is an underwater pipeline from the reservoir to Hong Kong Island, and to Cheung Chau Island as well.

Tung Chung Fort (東涌古堡)

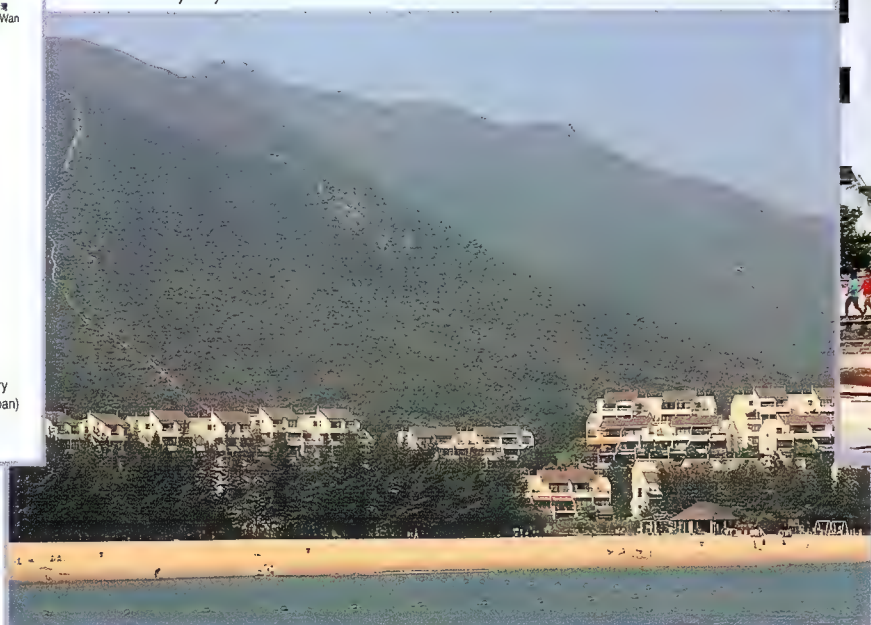
The valley of Tung Chung can be reached by bus from Silvermine Bay, (see Lantau bus schedule) or by a pleasant 3-hour walk downhill from the Po Lin Monastery. The Tung Chung Valley is a fertile farming area with some small Buddhist establishments in the upper reaches of the valley. The Tung Chung Fort dates back to 1817 when Chinese troops were first garrisoned on Lantau. There are six cannons in good condition cemented to the ramparts of the fort. The Tung Chung Valley also served as a base for the infamous pirate Cheung Po Tsai during the early part of the 19th Century.

Tai O (大澳)

Tai O has been the centre of the salt panning industry of Hong Kong for over 100 years. It has a population of about 10,000 people, and is a busy market town and fishing port. Of particular interest are the houses built on stilts above the water in the mainstream of the river. There are also many temples and Buddhist monasteries. The most well known temple is Kwan Ti (Lord Kwan) (關帝 pronounced Gwan Die) and is referred to locally as "Kwan Ti Koo Mui" — "The Old Temple of Kwan Ti". Located on Market Street, adjacent to a seafood restaurant, the temple features a bronze bell cast in the reign of Qianlong (1739). It is generally believed that the temple was built in the same year.



The Discovery Bay residential area with its fine sand beach beckons swimmers



Kwan Ti is the God of War and Righteousness whose existence can be traced back to the deification of an actual general who lived during the period known as the Three Kingdoms (220-280). He was widely venerated for his unstinting protection of the poor and dedication to rooting out evil and corruption.

Tea Gardens (茶園) on the Ngong Ping Plateau (昂平)

These are the only tea gardens in Hong Kong and they make a pleasant venue for an outing up to this 750-metre-high plateau.

The 64.8 hectares farm is reached by a road that runs between Cheung Sha and Tai O and produces many varieties of Chinese tea. Visitors can tour the gardens and also see tea being processed. Air-conditioned bungalows are available for overnight visitors as well as facilities for horse riding, cycling, roller skating and table tennis.

Po Lin or Precious Lotus Monastery (寶蓮寺)

The Po Lin Monastery, dedicated to the worship of Buddha, is situated on the plateau of Ngong Ping at an elevation of 750 metres. The original Po Lin Monastery was built in 1921, and a pair of two-storey temples have been added since. In the main temple there are three magnificent bronze statues of Buddha. In the dining hall, visitors can enjoy a vegetarian lunch for a small charge. It is also possible to stay overnight at the monastery, sleeping on hard boards. Guided by a monk, visitors can climb Lantau Peak (鳳凰山), 934 metres above sea level, early in the morning to watch the spectacular sunrise. Every year around May, on the Birthday of Sakyamuni, thousands of local Buddhists make their way to the temple to participate in the religious

ceremonies which include the bathing of the large statues in holy water. (If you are in Hong Kong during May and wish to see this festival, check with the Hong Kong Tourist Association for the exact date).

Beaches

Mui Wo (梅窩)

— see Silvermine Bay on previous page.

Cheung Sha (長沙)

One of the most attractive beaches on Lantau is about ten minutes by bus from Silvermine Bay (see Lantau bus schedule). Small islands dot the horizon and Chinese junks glide peacefully by Cheung Sha (Long Sand) and the 3.2-km-long beach is noted for its white sand. Government-run changing rooms, showers and toilets are nearby, and are free of charge.

Where to eat

Silvermine Beach Hotel (銀礦灣酒店)

Located at Silvermine Bay, Mui Wo. Cantonese and Western food.

Tong Fuk Provision Store (塘福士多)

Known locally as the Tong Fuk Hilton because its owner was originally a chef at the Hilton, it can be found at Pui O, about ten minutes' bus ride from Silvermine Bay. Western food.

Po Lin Monastery Canteen (寶蓮寺食堂)

Features one of the best vegetarian lunches to be found anywhere in Hong Kong, though the surroundings are rather basic. It is located inside the Po Lin Monastery.

Lantau Tea Garden (大嶼山茶園)

Behind the Po Lin Monastery. Serves tea grown locally on the only tea plantation in Hong Kong, plus simple Western and Chinese meals.



Photos by Wong Kin Man

A fishing village at Tai O, also known as Hong Kong's Venice



Oyster farms at Tung Chung



The bus terminus at Tai Yue Shan marks one end of a forty-kilometre highway leading past the second highest peak – Lantau Peak – in Hong Kong.



The Silvermine Beach Hotel at Mui Wo

Air Travel News

Taiyuan-Huangzhou-Xiamen: A new air route connects Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi on the Loess Plateau with Xiamen Special Economic Zone, via Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang. China General Airline, which has opened this route, will employ 120-seat Yak-42 aircraft. Flight time is about three hours.

Tianjin will set up an international air route this year to Myanmar, Japan and South Korea. In May, it will start domestic flights to Chengdu, Xi'an, Shenzhen and Fuzhou.

Shenzhen is increasing its number of flights from 35 to 146 a week. Situated close to Hong Kong, Shenzhen will be connected by air to Beijing, Shanghai, Harbin, Shenyang and Urumqi.

Lhasa-Kathmandu: China Southwest Airline will start flights between Lhasa in Tibet and Kathmandu in Nepal on July 1. There will be three flights a week. Flight SZ4007 will leave Lhasa at 10:30 a.m., arriving at Kathmandu at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays and Flight SZ4008 will leave Kathmandu at 12:30 p.m., arriving at Lhasa at 1:30 p.m. on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Baotou-Guangzhou A new flight has started between Baotou in Inner Mongolia and Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province. This 3,256-km flight takes just over four hours and leaves Guangzhou on Fridays, returning from Baotou on Sundays.

Xiamen-Shenzhen-Fuzhou Xiamen Aviation Co. Ltd. now has flights linking the Special Economic Zones of Xiamen in Fujian and Shenzhen in Guangdong with Fuzhou, capital of Fujian Province. Planes operating on this route are MD-82's and Boeing-737's.

Hohhot-Ulan Bator Hohhot in Inner Mongolia and Ulan Bator, capital of Mongolia now have an air link on Tuesdays and Fridays. The 970-km flight by Air China takes 90 minutes.

China Eastern Airlines is starting up new air routes with **Shanghai-Seattle-Chicago** recently put into service and **Shanghai-Beijing-Bahrain-Brussels-Madrid** beginning in June.

Restoration of the Old Home of the Monk Xuan Zang

Following many requests, the old dwelling of the monk Xuan Zang at Luoyang in Henan Province will be restored. Xuan Zang, the famous Buddhist monk of the Tang Dynasty, made a long journey to India in the 7th century in quest of Buddhist scriptures. He returned to China with these scriptures 14 years after he had set out. He spent the rest of his life translating them in a monastery which the emperor had ordered built to house the documents. His famous travels were the inspiration for the famous epic novel *Journey to the West*.

Guilin Landscape Festival

Guilin is planning to stage an eight-day landscape festival in November. Members of local national minorities will take part in a number of performances and other cultural activities. Besides these, there will be trade fairs and visits to famous sites, and an opening day performance on November 8 on the banks of the Lijiang River.

The White Cloud Pavilion at Wuhan

Equally famous as the Yellow Crane Pagoda, the new Baiyun (White Cloud) Pavilion in Wuhan, Hubei Province, has recently been opened. First built in the Jin Dynasty (265-420), the pavilion has been pulled down and rebuilt on numerous occasions. Six storeys high, two of which are underground, it stands on Mount Gaoguan and is decorated with glazed black tiles.

Japanese Finance Protection Centre at Dunhuang Grottoes

The Dunhuang Grottoes, are classified by UNESCO as one of the most important Buddhist historical sites in the world. The caves frescoes and statues, however, are in danger of being lost through deterioration. In an effort to save the grottoes, the Japanese are financing a centre there for the protection, study and the exhibiting of relics from the grottoes. The 5,051-square-metre centre is expected to be finished in 1993.

Hotel News

The Westin Tai Ping Yang Hotel in Shanghai opened at the end of March. Located in the heart of the new Hongqiao Development Zone, it is planned to become a future centre for international commerce, with residential blocks, offices and commercial areas. The 5-star hotel has 578 guest rooms including 39 suites, four Executive Club floors and two Executive Club lounges. Other facilities include a business centre, sauna, health club and swimming pool as well as a number of restaurants serving fine cuisine. The grand ballroom can hold 1,400 guests. Privileged use of the Shanghai Country Club with its 36-hole golf course beside Lake Dianshan is available to guests.

The 5-star **Hua Ting Sheraton Hotel Shanghai** is offering a special business package to businessmen between April 1 and November 30 this year. Room rates for both single and double occupancy during this time is US\$85 and include American breakfast, laundry and dry-cleaning service, two-way shuttle between the airport and the hotel and a daily international newspaper.

The **Huashan Hotel**, situated at the foot of Mount Huashan in Shaanxi Province, has recently been opened. On the Xi'an-Tongguan Highway, it is a 132-room hotel. Some ten restaurants offer a variety of cuisines. In addition, there is a conference hall, a multi-function room, hi-fi system and modern communication equipment.

The grand opening of the **Shanghai International Equatorial Hotel** has been held. Situated at 65 Yan'an Road West, the hotel has 526 top-grade guest rooms, all with individual temperature control, television and internationally-connected telephones. The hotel also has a business centre and function rooms for exhibitions and banquets. In addition there is also a bar, a karaoke room and a selection of restaurants. Guests staying there have access to the Shanghai International Club, which offers bowling, a sport centre with swimming pool, billiards and sauna.

Silk Road Festival at Lanzhou

Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province, will stage its first Silk Road Festival in mid-September. The programme will include artistic performances, exhibitions of relics, books, paintings photos and folklore, a seminar on the Silk Road and a commercial fair.



The first property development enterprise for foreigners in Beijing

The first property development enterprise for foreigners in Beijing, Beijing North Star Real Estate Corporation.

The corporation now offers the Overseas Chinese Apartments and Beijing Hui Yuan Apartments located in the XI Asian Games Athlete Village for sale.

* Beautiful environment and convenient location: The apartments are just 9 km from Tian An Men Square, 20 km from the capital's airport and have such facilities as shopping centre, restaurant, parking lot, bank, recreational palace and office building.

* Residential and Business Apartments.

* Health centre, beauty salon. Karaoke and indoor all-weather swimming pool are also available.

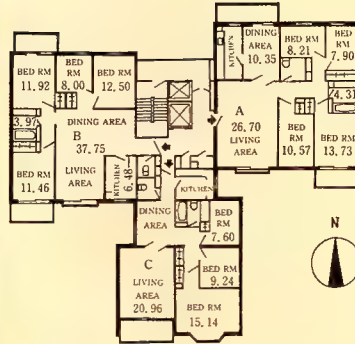
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* Ownership can be inherited, transferred, rented and mortgaged.

* The Trust and Consultant Corporation of the China Bank and Hongkong Commercial Bank can offer mortgage loans up to 70% of the total house value and on repayment terms of up to ten years.

Basic Price: US\$156,000 per suite.

Floor Area: From 125 square meters (3 bedrooms and 2 living rooms) to 203 square meters (4 bedrooms and 2 living rooms). Various types of flat are available.



Overseas Chinese Apartments



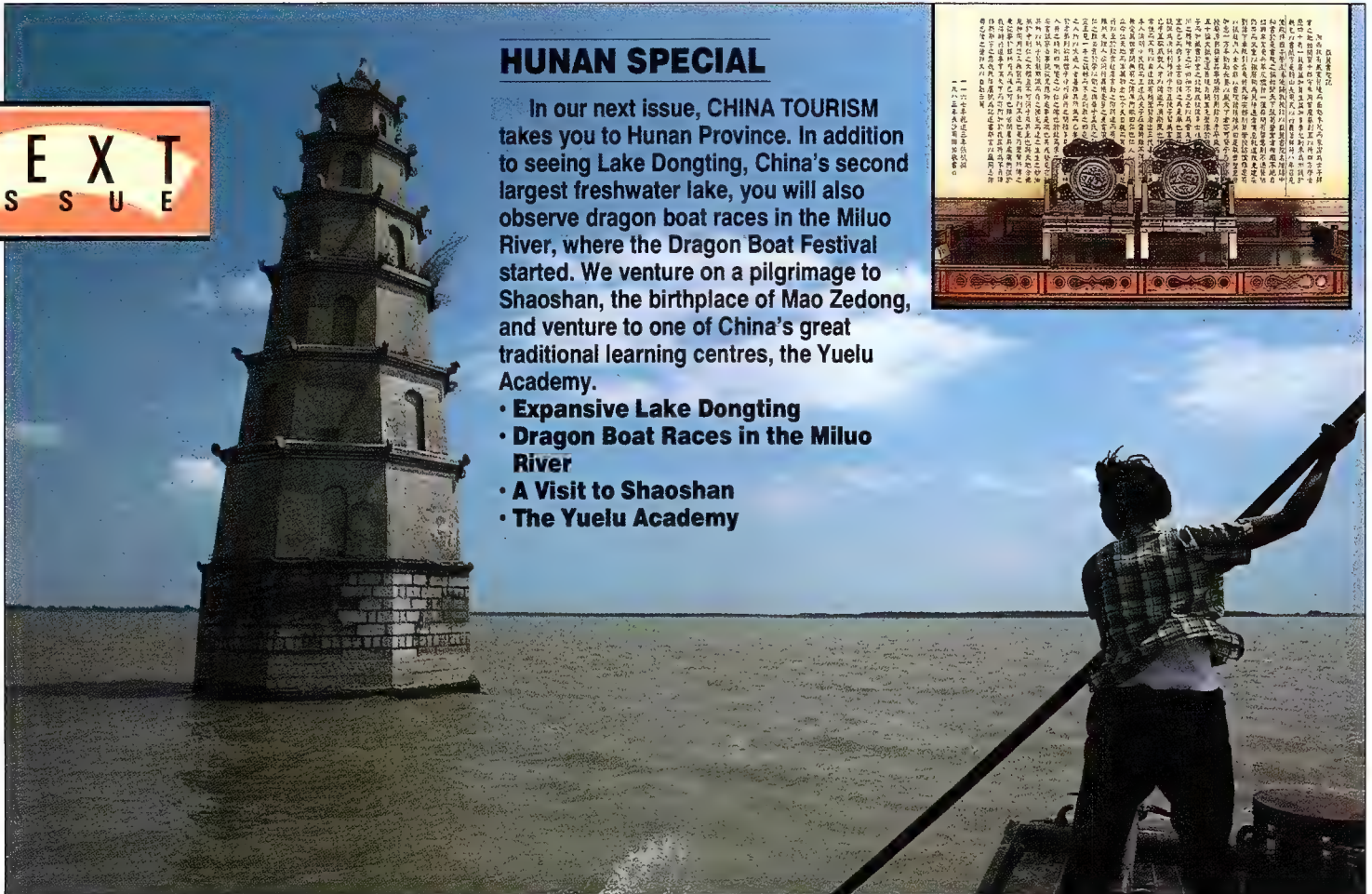
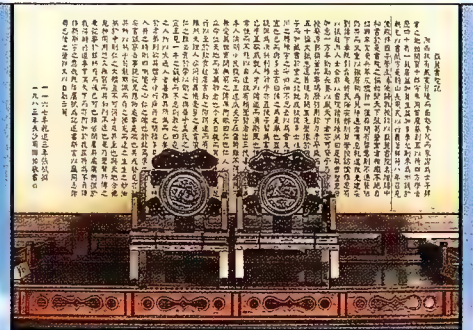
Beijing North Star Real Estate Corporation

Address: Building 6, Block 3 Anhuili, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China
Tel: 4911206/4910643 Fax: 4910678 Post Code: 100101

HUNAN SPECIAL

In our next issue, CHINA TOURISM takes you to Hunan Province. In addition to seeing Lake Dongting, China's second largest freshwater lake, you will also observe dragon boat races in the Miluo River, where the Dragon Boat Festival started. We venture on a pilgrimage to Shaoshan, the birthplace of Mao Zedong, and venture to one of China's great traditional learning centres, the Yuelu Academy.

- **Expansive Lake Dongting**
- **Dragon Boat Races in the Miluo River**
- **A Visit to Shaoshan**
- **The Yuelu Academy**



**EXT
SSUE**

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Inner Mongolia Frozen Beef



內蒙古擁有天然草場八十八萬平方公里，牧養着數百萬牛羊。這裏很少污染，無農藥殘留。公司自設十四間肉類加工廠，按伊斯蘭屠宰方法宰殺。設備先進、工藝講究，加工精細。牛肉還可按客戶要求分割加工包裝。內蒙古牛肉，肉質鮮嫩，倍受青睞。歡迎各國貿易界朋友垂詢。

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CHINA INNER MONGOLIA AUTONOMOUS REGION CEREALS, OILS & FOODSTUFFS IMP. & EXP. CORP., General Manager: Pan Shi Guang, Vice General Managers: Du Cai Xiang, Li Guo Qing, Tan Yu Gen Address: 7, 8/F, International Trade Building, No 24 Zhong Shan Road West Huhhot, China Cable: 85014 COFIM CN Fax: (0471) 667615 Tel: 666873 Postcode: 010020

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(b) the text? ☐ very good ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ not impressed

Which articles in this issue did you find the most interesting?

(a) _____ (b) _____

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Have you any suggestion to offer us which will help us to improve our magazine?

No. 143

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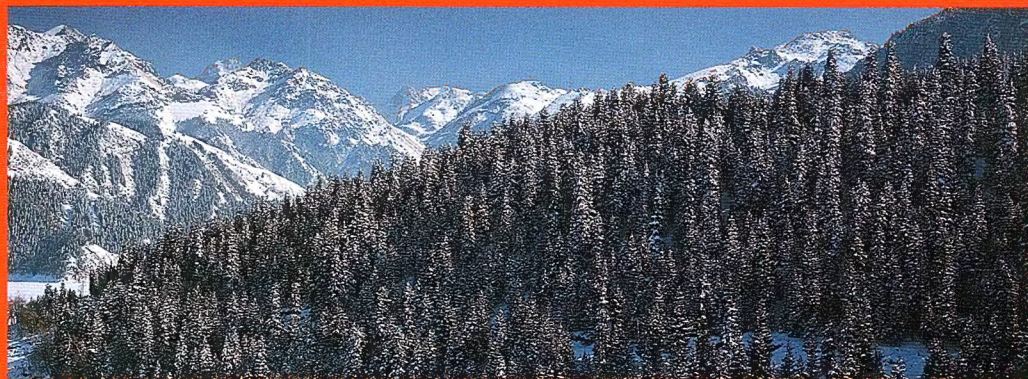
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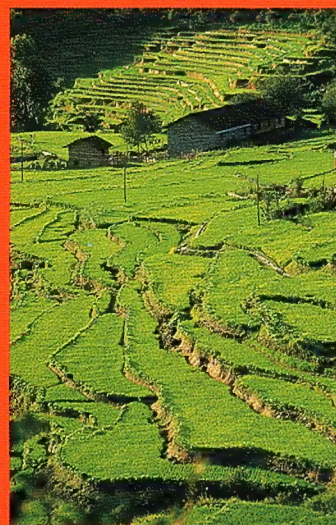
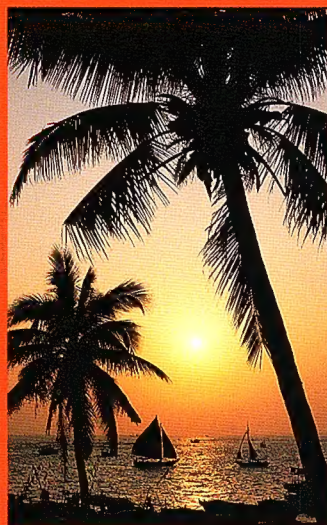
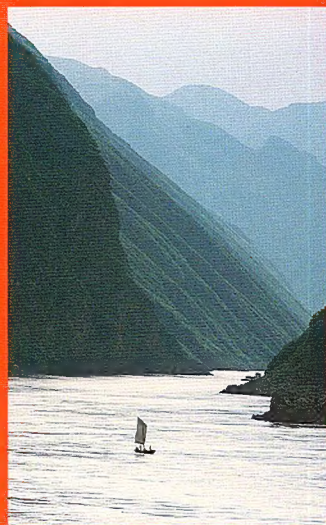
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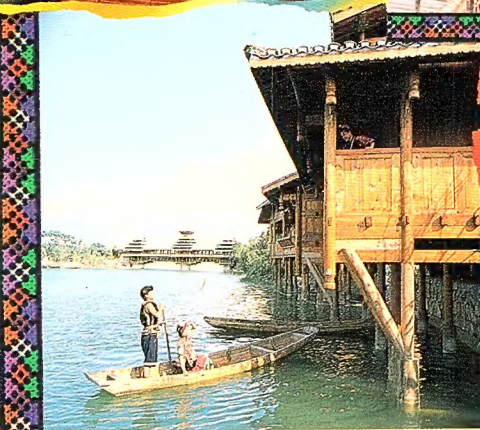
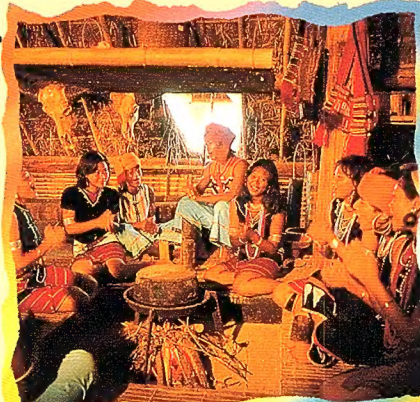
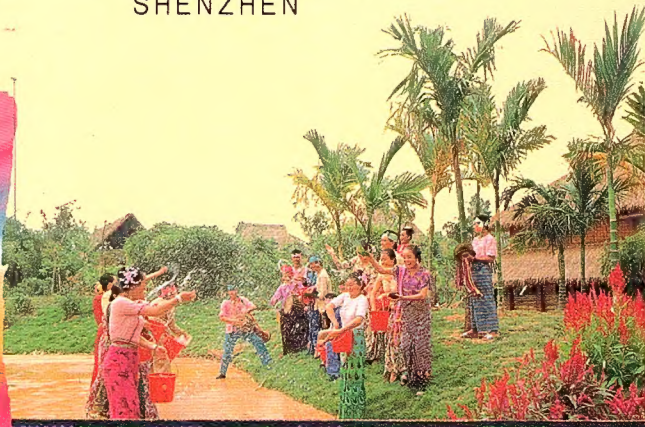
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